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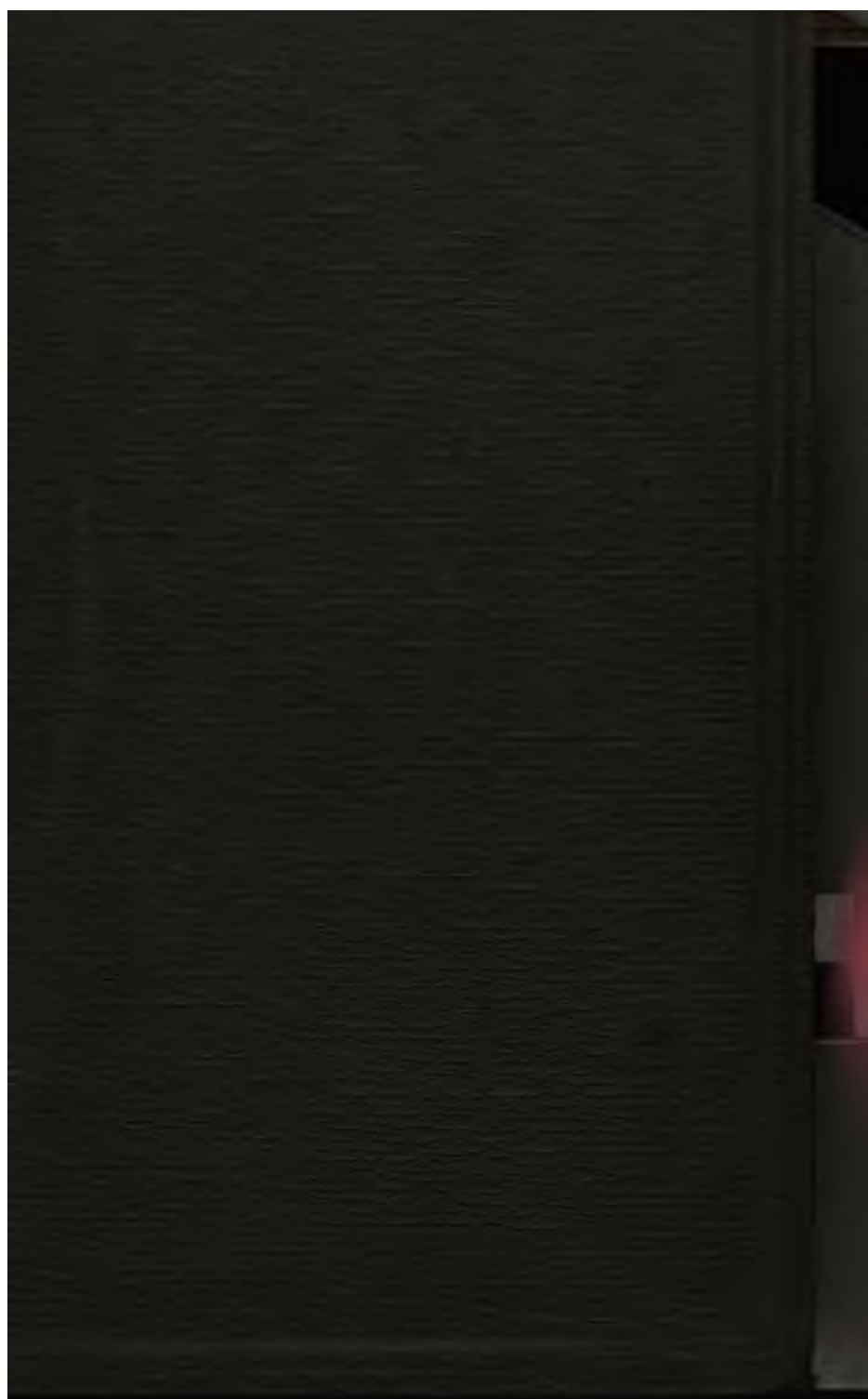
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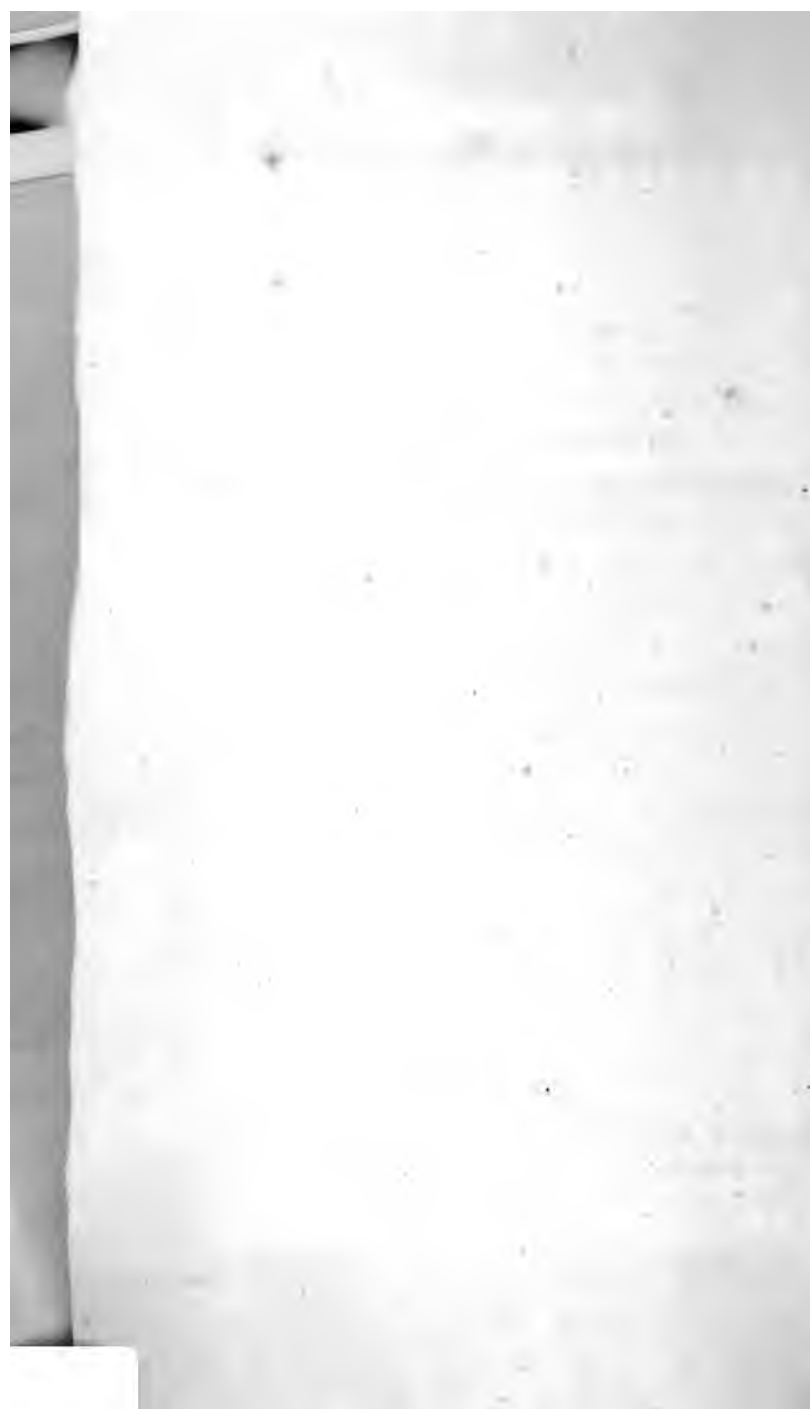
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MARRIED FOR LOVE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"COUSIN GEOFFREY," "THE MARRYING MAN,"
"THE MATCHMAKER," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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MARRIED FOR LOVE.

CHAPTER I.

A PARVENU AND A PEER.

EMMELINE MONTRESOR was the idol of society, the belle of the season, and the pet of her family. Her mother, who had been a beauty, and who therefore attached undue importance to personal attractions, positively doated on one, in whom, she fancied, she saw her own youth and bloom restored. "I hope she will make more of her advantages than her poor mother has!" she would often say, either to some toady, whose interest it was to deceive her, or to that greater deceiver still, her own heart.

Lady Montresor was very vain, very ambitious, and consequently very discontented. When she was twenty-two years of age, she had thought herself very fortunate in having, by her great beauty and greater cunning, induced the second son of her father's patron and squire (Sir Maurice Montresor) to marry her privately. She was the fifth daughter of the Rev. Job Meeke, the poor curate of the rich rector at Montresor, and who, being a good classical scholar, eked out his very small stipend, for the sake of his very large family, by taking a few pupils to prepare for Oxford and Cambridge: among them was Hildebrand Montresor, who paid a great deal more attention to the smiles of pretty Jane than to the frowns of old Job Meeke. The latter, finding his pupil made little progress, (but without the slightest suspicion of the cause of his vagrant attention,) advised his patron to purchase him a commission in the Guards. Now as Hildebrand Montresor was really in love, and had a high sense of honour, and a very kind heart, he remained true to his Jane, even after he had been two years in close communion with gay, dissipated, worldly spirits, who looked upon marriage merely as a way (a very disagreeable one) of paying their debts, or increasing their import-

ance,—young men with very green heads, and very grey hearts, who would have applauded Hildebrand Montresor had he made Jane Meeke his mistress, but have thought him mad for making her his wife. However, Jane was in no danger either from her lover or herself. He was all love and honour; she all prudence and ambition. She knew he was only a subaltern, in debt, as all subalterns in “crack” regiments are, and entirely dependent on his father at that time, and *in futuro* on an eldest brother, who did not love him; but still she resolved to marry him. She would become a Montresor; and the son of a Baronet with ten thousand a year could not be permitted to starve; his family must do something for him—hers could do nothing for her!

Jane Meeke went then on a visit to South-end; and there she was privately married to Hildebrand Montresor,—she being twenty-two, and he twenty-three years of age. They kept their secret so well that no one (but friends of hers immediately concerned) guessed it. Two years passed, and wrought a wonderful change in the prospects of the young couple. An accident out hunting deprived Hildebrand of his elder brother; and the shock and the grief attendant on

the loss of his favourite son caused the death of his father,—a martyr to gout. Here was a turn of fortune's wheel, to make young heads very giddy! But the son had loved his father; and the weight at his heart kept him steady. Jane Meeke, now Lady Montresor, was in a fever of pride, insolence, and vanity; instead of plain Hildebrand Montresor, in debt and dependant, her husband was Sir Hildebrand, with ten thousand a year, a park in Berks, a castle in Scotland, and a mansion in Grosvenor Square. The wife whom Hildebrand dared not acknowledge in his poverty, was now introduced by him, presented in due time at Court, and welcomed by the *élite*!... People in the neighbourhood of Montresor Park, who had sneered at the Rev. Job Meeke and all his handsome daughters, and who had especially despised all Jane Meeke's efforts to shine, to conciliate, and to amuse, suddenly discovered that they could scarcely exist out of the fascinating presence of "Jane Lady Montresor:" and she, heartless, thankless, and ridiculously vain, forgetting past slights, and devouring present flatteries, actually began to reckon for nothing the pedestal on which she was now placed, with all the advantages of dress, equipage, introduction, and position which she now enjoyed,

and to lament that she had not "done better" with the charms which she heard so much extolled.

So intoxicated was this weak woman by her new position and the power it gave her, that because, as Lady Montresor, she had an earl in her train, she began to imagine that had she but waited a little longer, she might, as "Jane Meeke," have secured a coronet.

It was not very long before the ill-concealed discontent of the woman he had raised, became apparent to Sir Hildebrand, and was, of course, extremely offensive to him. He had married "Jane Meeke" because he was passionately in love with her,—a selfish motive certainly, but it is a species of selfishness generally very endearing to the woman who is the object of it. She had never regretted her marriage while deceiving her father, and living as "Jane Meeke, spinster," in the old parsonage, making the poor curate's little, still less! She was then, very proud of the secret consciousness that she had become a Montresor, a married woman, and that, come what would, she could never be an old maid, as some of her sisters were or would be. At that time, in the prime of her life and her beauty, she had gloried in her clandestine marriage with Mr. Hildebrand

Montresor ; and at fifty, lean, faded, with a repulsive air of discontent, and a whining voice, she was ashamed of not being something more important than a Baronet's wife. All her hope now was, that Emmeline would be the means of connecting her with that peerage which she studied, worshipped, and regretted, as Eve must have done the bowers of Eden. She, Lady Montresor, was most erroneously but most thoroughly convinced, that but for Sir Hildebrand, she might have figured as a Peeress in the pages of Burke, Dodd, and Debrett.

Sir Hildebrand was very superior to most men of fashion, for he had a heart ; but his wife at last contrived to close it against herself. He had a head too, but it had never calculated that when it plotted a clandestine marriage with "Jane Meeke," the shame and regret in after-years would be on the side of the curate's daughter. Even if fate had not so unexpectedly awarded to him a title and ten thousand a year, he had fancied (poor fellow !) that whenever he owned his pretty Jane as "Mrs. Montresor," her cup of pride and joy would be full.

Sir Hildebrand then, wounded, disgusted, and disappointed, soon grew to dislike, almost to hate, his long-idolized "Jane." Although her hus-

band, he had been her lover for more than two years after their union ; for they met so seldom and so stealthily, that there was no possibility in their case that familiarity should breed contempt, or intimacy destroy illusion. He never really knew her well, until she was Lady Montresor. He knew her only too well then, and despised her too. He shunned her society as much as he had once courted it. He became one of the "Invisible London husbands ;" and his children, a noble boy (Maurice) and a lovely girl (Emmeline), grew from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to youth, almost as if they had been fatherless !...The boy, who was the eldest, was not born until Sir Hildebrand had been two years in possession of the "Montresor" title and estates. As children, they certainly were strikingly like their mother ; they had her fair hair, lily and rose complexion, small features, and slender forms. She was very proud of them, and of their likeness to her, which she increased by the style and colours of their dresses. At that time, grown women were not thought ridiculous if they wore their hair in a ringlet crop, called *à la Ninon*. Lady Montresor's was always dressed in this style ; and her Maurice's and her Emmeline's long ringlets of golden flax

falling on their white shoulders, were a miniature of their mother's. From being so much with her, they of course (imitative as children always are) copied her gestures, looks, and tones, all of which had become so odious to Sir Hildebrand in his thankless parvenu wife, that his children's beauty had no charm for him.

The Earl of Wrexham was Lady Montresor's oracle. This nobleman was an old intimate of the Montresor family—a devoted admirer of the fair—and a man of so much honour, in spite of a great deal of nonsense—that Sir Hildebrand, who saw Lady Montresor's vanity could not be satisfied without a Peer in her train, was quite satisfied to see his old friend installed as "*L'ami de la Maison.*" But Lady Montresor quite mistook the nature of Lord Wrexham's attentions. He devoted himself to her, because a lady, to whom he had been for years a "*preux chevalier,*" suddenly, at forty-five, became a widow. He was thus thrown out of place, for he had no immediate intention of marrying, and certainly would only confer his coronet on a very young and very smooth brow, if he did. He wanted an elegant woman to listen to him—a noble establishment where he could feel himself at home—a splendid equipage in which he could

be sure of a seat—and a family in whose affairs he could always meddle,—this was all : but Lady Montresor, misled by his irresponsible attentions, soon convinced herself that Lord Wrexham would have proposed to her had she but been single.

He ! the most fastidious, exacting, and conceited of bachelors of sixty ! who required, in return for his modern coronet and antiquated but well-preserved charms, beauty in its first bloom, birth, large fortune, accomplishments, grace.... And yet Lady Montresor always thought, if it ever were her fate to be a widow, he would be but too delighted to be permitted to throw himself and that coronet at her feet. Oh, vanity ! vanity ! all is vanity ! at least in the heart of such a woman ! As it was, the Earl of Wrexham was consulted about everything, from the colour of a ribbon to the choice of a school or college ; and being very dictatorial, and never allowed to dictate in his own *clique*, a great meddler, and a perfect busy-body, Lady Montresor was often reduced to a cypher in her own home, where everything was regulated by the caprice of a vain and antiquated coxcomb.

The darling wish of Lady Montresor's heart, at the period of our tale, was to see her Emme-

line's twenty-one summers wedded to the sixty winters of the Right Hon. George Earl of Wrexham. It was a strange fancy, and proved that love had never had any share in Lady Montresor's devotion to the Earl; for no woman who had, from feelings of affection, wished to be a man's wife, would be satisfied with becoming his mother. But ambition, we all know, is not over-nice.

What his Lordship's sentiments and intentions were, we cannot presume to say. He had certainly been very anxious that Emmeline should receive every possible advantage. He had recommended her governesses and masters; and he had ordained that her education should be completed by a Mrs. Howard De Vere, a lady who lived in Hyde Park Square, and who, left a destitute widow by a fashionable spendthrift, received eight young ladies of family and fortune into her own house, and fitted them for the "*beau monde*" and "society," as that small *clique* is called, which seems to have nothing to do but to enjoy, and therefore enjoys nothing.

It was also by the Earl of Wrexham's advice that young Maurice Montresor was sent first to Eton, then to Christchurch, Oxford, and finally into a dragoon regiment, which was soon ordered

to India; and it was by his advice that at nineteen (not before) Emmeline was removed from Mrs. Howard De Vere's "elegant haunt of the Muses and the Graces," to revel in all the delights a first season affords to a young beauty whose parents live in Grosvenor Square, and have ten thousand a year.

CHAPTER II.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

“No, Claude, no! do not urge it; this must be our last meeting! I am here only to say so.”

“Only to break my heart, Emmeline! Well, be it so! You will be happy!”

“Happy! Oh, Claude, I must be miserable, come what will! Every feeling of my heart is at war with every principle of my life! I, who so loathe concealment, yet meet you—correspond with you, clandestinely! I, who detest deception, my life is now one lie! I can bear the reproaches of my conscience no longer! Claude, for pity’s sake say you forgive—that you release me from my silly promise, and let me go! Oh, you know not what I risk by meeting you here!”

“There is no risk, Emmeline! Ruth is keeping watch for us. You talk of the reproaches of your own conscience; will it be silent, Emmeline, when you hear, as you most surely will ere long, that he who has so wildly worshipped, so passionately loved you, has either died the slow death of the broken-hearted, or, having lost all that made life dear, in the madness of his despair, has entailed upon himself, by one rash act, an eternity of anguish! Ah, you weep; you will weep more bitterly than, Emmeline! I do believe that the hour will come when you would gladly give up all the gorgeous vanities and mean ambitions for which you now sacrifice me, and the great and holy love of my true heart, to bring me back to the life you have embittered, and to feel that very heart you have broken, throb once again as wildly as it does now! But it will be vain—vain—most vain! too late! too late! Your tears may freshen the daisies on my nameless grave—even your tears will not affect me then!”

These words of passionate, though selfish love (but what passionate love is *not* selfish?) were addressed by Claude Lindsay, a young barrister of the Inner Temple—tall, pale, intellectual-looking, and in love for the first time in his life,

to our Emmeline Montresor. Claude Lindsay was a brother of a schoolfellow of Emmeline's. He was of a respectable family ; and his father being at one time reputed a *millionaire*, his daughters were received by Mrs. De Vere into her fashionable and most exclusive finishing-school, and allowed to mix with the young patri-cians whom alone she professed to receive. But old Lindsay, a great speculator, failed, to a fabulous amount. The Misses Lindsay were at once sent home, but not until, at some "*soirées dansantes*" at Mrs. De Vere's, and at some enchanting fêtes and private theatricals at the Lindsays, Claude had fallen desperately in love with the large black eyes and long gold tresses of the peerless Emmeline Montresor ; and she, full of poetry, and of Sir E. B. Lytton's early novels, had read with delight, love letters, whose poetical eloquence was worthy of "Zanoni," and had answered them with the tenderness and passion of a Viola.

Claude Lindsay's father lived, like Emmeline's, in Grosvenor Square. The Lindsays' house was a palace—the Montresors' only a mansion. The Lindsays lived at the rate of thirty thousand per annum. The Montresors had only ten thousand a year.

But yet the Montresors held themselves far above the Lindsays, whom they looked upon rather in the light of wealthy parvenus. Still the vicinity of their town residences, gave great facilities to the young people, in the clandestine attachment they had formed. The gardens of the Square were accessible to Claude and his sisters; and Claude seldom rode his thoroughbred mare, followed by his stylish groom, or drove his "neat turn-out" through the square, without Emmeline's sweet face smiling and blushing as he passed: and whenever she rode, drove, or stepped in white tarlatan into her mother's carriage, to go to ball, opera, or play, Claude contrived to pass and gaze at her beauty.

It was before the sudden crash which changed a golden idol into a brazen swindler (there is all that difference between a successful and an unsuccessful speculator), that Claude Lindsay, ignorant of Lady Montresor's views, and overrating the importance of his father's reputed wealth, obtained Emmeline's consent to make a formal proposal to her parents:—To his unutterable surprise and indignation, he received an answer so haughty in its rejection, and so cold in its contemptuous civility, that nothing but the passionate love he bore the daughter, could

have prevented his openly insulting the father. As it was, he registered a vow (in which revenge had as great a share as love) to make Emmeline Montresor his wife, in spite of that haughty father, and her vain, ambitious, and heartless mother. The cruel treatment he had met with from Emmeline's parents, gave him a hold upon her which he was determined not to relinquish; and he made her agreeing to correspond with and meet him clandestinely in the gardens of the square, the price of his abstaining from quarrelling with her father, and addressing to her mother a letter containing his opinion of her and of her conduct.

Thus was the poor girl driven into the snares. It was very wrong, very cruel, and very selfish in Claude Lindsay; but he was in love; and love is very cruel and very selfish. In the midst of that tumult of contending emotions on both sides, old Lindsay failed for more than a million; and those who know what woman's love is, will not marvel to hear that, if Emmeline Montresor had loved him in his prosperity, she worshipped him in his sudden and unmerited ruin. When old Mr. Lindsay, who had been long a widower, lived, Claude, though his head quarters when in London were in Grosvenor Square, had some

of the best chambers in the Inner Temple. Luckily for him, he had some hundreds at his bankers, and few or no debts. He hoped to be able to live like a gentleman, "till something turned up;" and in case of Emmeline's consenting to elope with him, he had enough for the great and inevitable expenses such a step would entail. Everything that had been his father's went to the creditors, who only growled the more, like tigers when an insufficient meal is given them. The Misses Lindsay—pretty, elegant, and highly accomplished—had an aunt in Bombay, who at once invited them to come to her on a matrimonial speculation. They thought it better than going out as governesses; and at the period of our tale were about to set sail for "The land of the East and the clime of the sun."

Claude would then, as he told Emmeline, be indeed desolate, alone in his ruin and despair. She wept bitterly;—poor Claude alone and in sorrow!

Claude Lindsay saw and improved his advantage—not because it was an object to him *now* to marry a girl of great fortune, or rather, expectations;—no! he really loved her. Interest had nothing to do with his desire to make her his; but revenge had, and that revenge urged

him on. His vehemence terrified the young girl, and in some measure defeated its own purpose. She was pleased to be loved, but she had no great wish to be married—few young girls with so delightful a home, have. Her father, little as she saw of him, seemed to love and trust her. Her mother made an idol of her; a rich aunt, a sister of her father's, had doated on her, and while she lived with the Montresors, had conceived hopes for her as ambitious as her mother's; but she had died suddenly, and the bulk of her fortune had returned to her husband's family, while two hundred a year—her own absolutely—she had left to Emmeline, desiring she might, as soon as she left school, have the entire control of that small income for her own dress and pocket-money. A poor aunt, sister of her mother, looked to her and the great match she was one day to make, to raise her from dependence and contempt to competence and consideration; and several penniless cousins anticipated the time, when the generous, independent-spirited Emmeline would have a noble, elegant home of her own, and atone to them for all the slights and inhospitalities of her haughty mother.

The meeting we have described took place in

the gardens of Grosvenor Square. It was ten o'clock at night, and the very height of the London season. On that beautifully-kept lawn and shrubbery the moon shone as brightly as on the wildest heath or darkest forest: the plants emitted an intoxicating fragrance (at least to those lovers it seemed so), and the scene within that iron paling—the freshness, the flowers, the moonlight, and the shade—the night dews that uncurled Emmeline's golden hair, and, above all, the “true love,” whose “course” never did “run smooth,” formed a curious contrast to what was passing without; the ceaseless roll of carriages bearing Vanity to scenes of almost certain disappointment; the gay parties going on in many of the mansions around; the streams of light; the triumphant bursts of music;—in short, the London season at its giddy height in Grosvenor Square.

Emmeline's maid, “Ruth,” had accompanied her young mistress “for the last, positively last time.” Emmeline, frank by nature, and hating every species of trickery, had, in order to avert (as she believed) worse evils, been obliged to counterfeit illness; and when Lady Montresor unwillingly set out alone—a blaze of diamonds, for a grand dinner party—she had kissed Em-

meline in her bed, and mourned over her pale cheek and heavy eyes....Pale she might well be; and her eyes were red with weeping. But no sooner was her mother gone, than hating herself for the double part she was playing, Emmeline sprang from her bed, and rushed to her window; and there, already in the Square, and standing in the silver rays of the moon, gazing at the light burning in her room, stood Claude Lindsay. How humbled Emmeline felt by the delight of her maid Ruth. Ruth had no scruples. Ruth thought it a great triumph of woman's wit and love's disguises to jilt the "old Earl, and sham sick, to keep company with the young man of her art." Ruth had "that fellow feeling which makes one wondrous kind."

Ruth was a beauty in her way; and the middle-aged butler, Mr. Smooth, who had laid by money which he privately lent out on bill at cent. per cent., was to Ruth what the Earl of Wrexham was to Emmeline, while Lankaster (Thomas Lankaster was his name, but he was always called "Lankaster"), my lady's own footman, was her Claude Lindsay,—nay, Ruth would have thought Lankaster insulted by the comparison. Claude was five feet ten,—Lankaster six feet three;—Claude very slight and

spare,—Lankaster, in muscular development, a study for an artist. His features were of a cast that led one to believe there was some patrician blood in his veins ; and when under the influence of champagne or maraschino, privately and hastily tossed off in the butler's pantry, at dinner parties—he had hinted as much !—Never did blacker eyes contrast with white powder or whiter teeth. He was just one and twenty. Nothing, physically speaking, more handsome ever came from Nature's mould ; and his powder, his livery, green and gold, with tags, plush, white silk stockings, and gold-headed stick, made him look more like a Court fop of Queen Anne's day than a footman of ours. At the first glance, he surprised by his beauty, and no gentleman could compare with him for that one moment ; but on the next, the eye fell with a feeling of relief, from that gaudy perfection of form and colouring, on any face dignified by thought, softened by feeling, or refined by education,—at least that was the experience of the intellectual. To many, ladies too,

“ Maidens in whose blue eye was set
Some spark of the Plantagenet,”

Lankaster, (whom as a footman they could scarcely recognise as a man), was secretly an object of

wonder and admiration. Ruth was desperately in love with this be-powdered and be-plushed Adonis. She saw no deficiency of expression in the black eyes and the coral lips that smiled so tenderly on her. Lankaster was not bright; and Mr. Smooth considered him "soft," and often spoke of him as "a great stupid;" but if Lankaster had no great intellect, he had violent passions, was a good boxer, and had even hinted that he might be compelled to "double up" Mr. Smooth. The hint was quite enough for Mr. Smooth; he would not unfold his opinion at the risk of being doubled up himself.

Of course, Emmeline's secret, which she thought known only to her favourite Ruth, was whispered to Lankaster, and by him to all the footmen who congregate outside Kensington Gardens and fashionable churches and chapels, and impudently dissect the "morale" and the "physique" of all the haughty fair ones they seem so to revere. Poor Emmeline! here was another degrading consequence of her clandestine engagement! Little did she dream that Lankaster, who, as a footman bred and born, had such perfect command of every muscle of his countenance, that he never seemed to hear or see anything that was not his own business, was, as a man,

impertinent enough to canvass the sacred secret of her heart, discuss her beauty, pity her bad taste, calculate her fortune, and bet upon the chances of the "relieving officer," (alias her father, Sir Hildebrand), giving his consent, and on that, greater still, of her marrying without it !

But to return to the Square and the lovers. Emmeline had risen to go ; weeping bitterly, she yet held out her hand and said, "Farewell, Claude !" The attitude, the expression, and the figures of these young lovers were at this moment strikingly like those in that pretty and touching picture—"The Last Appeal," only that "the registered tile" and the "light paletôt" of the gentleman,—his lemon kid gloves, modish trowsers, and patent leather boots, were not half so picturesque as the attire chosen by the painter ; and Emmeline's flounced and sweeping dress of lilac glace, and tiny white chip bonnet, had not half the charm of the bare head, tight jacket, and short petticoat of the artist's "beau idéal." But the expression of haggard, passionate, half-despairing earnestness in the lover, and of mournful determination in the maiden, were the same.

"A few minutes longer, Emmeline ! Oh, do

not leave me alone ; it is so dreadful to be alone with Despair ! It is easy to you to say farewell ! You have a happy home, and many to love and cherish you. I have nothing in the world but you. I never loved anything else. I know I ought not to wish you to marry a ruined man ! but when first I loved you, and first exposed myself to your father's contempt and your mother's insults, I believed my fortune far exceeded yours, as, of course, the man's always should. But if you would be mine, I should have such an incentive to exertion, I could not fail to rise rapidly into that eminence at the bar, which is in itself rank and fortune ! ”

“And in the meantime, Claude? It is true that I believe if I marry as my parents wish, I shall have a fortune far beyond my desires ; but I feel certain, were I to disappoint them, and marry one they have so decidedly rejected, they would never see me again — never give me a shilling ! All I should have in that case would be the miserable two hundred a year my aunt left me, and which is now paid me regularly for my own expenses.... While you, dearest, were making that name, which, with your noble talents and great genius I doubt not you would make, fancy how you would like to live on two hundred a year ! ”...

“To me, Emmeline, to live in the smallest cottage, on the merest pittance, with you, would be a rapture which it makes me giddy to think of! But your parents idolize you. Very soon; only too soon! they would forgive you and me too, and”

“Oh! do not talk of it; you deceive me;—you deceive yourself! They would never forgive. I might endure poverty. Women, when they love, can bear anything; but you, accustomed all your life to such princely affluence! You, after a day of hard and disappointing toil, returning to a meanly-dressed wife in a little lodging, on a second floor—tallow candles—cold mutton—steel forks, and no attendants—no wine!”...

“Emmeline, your picture is taken from novels. What can you know of the details of poverty?”

“But novels are taken from real life; and even I know enough of the value of money to be quite sure that what I describe is the style in which a young couple with only two hundred a year must live. Look at my aunt Meeke! Ah, I forgot I have but a hundred and fifty a year; for I allow her fifty of it. Papa gives her a hundred besides. Well, there is only herself;

and she is very economical, and an excellent manager; but she can only contrive, as she says, barely to exist."

"Ah, Emmeline, if you loved as I do, you could not calculate thus—you could not look beyond the rapture of our being all the world to each other! You would feel sure, as I do, that your parents would forgive, and that if they did not, I should soon be enabled to atone to you for their cruelty!...Emmeline, do not go;—in mercy say you will meet me once more!"

"No! no! no more, Claude,—in mercy do not ask it!"

"You will write then?"

"Claude, I cannot!"

"Emmeline, you shall *not* go! What right have you to destroy a man you once encouraged to love you? Sit down, I implore, I command you! Don't tremble so, my child—my love—my wife! I am not mad, but oh, so miserable!" And he forced her to sit on a bench near her; and kneeling before her, he raised, in the pale light of the moon, eyes from which the large tears gushed, over cheeks white as that moon herself.

Just at this moment Ruth came running towards them. "Oh, miss," she exclaimed, "her

ladyship will be back in five minutes ; Lankaster has just been to tell me so."

At Ruth's approach, Claude had started to his feet.

"Farewell, Claude!" said Emmeline, sobbing.

"No! no! no!" said Claude, "I will not leave you till you promise to meet me again; I will follow you—I will not leave you!"

"Oh, sir," said Ruth, "you will ruin me and my young lady too; oh, pray don't follow us!" But he strode by Emmeline's side as she hastened to the gates.

"Emmeline," he cried, "once more say you will meet me again, or I follow you, ay, into your father's house!"

The gate slowly opened from the outside.

"At your peril, sir," said a stern voice;—"follow at your peril! Oh, Emmeline, I had not expected this of you. Ruth, you leave my house at dawn to-morrow; I would say to-night, but that I cannot turn a woman into the street at this hour. As for you, sir, you are no gentleman, or you would not persecute a lady who evidently wishes to avoid you."

"I suppose, sir," said Claude, hoarse with passion, "you presume to say I am no gentleman, in the hope of evading the explanation

your conduct to me entitles me to demand. You shall hear from me, sir ! ”

“As you please ! I can hear nothing from a man who addresses my daughter not merely against my will, but her own, to which I shall condescend to reply. Emmeline, take my arm.”

Emmeline obeyed ; she looked round, but she could not see Claude ; he had hurried off in another direction, and the trees concealed him. But she did see Mr. Smooth dart down the area steps into the lower regions of her father’s house ; and in an incredibly short space of time open the door, grave as a judge, and calm as a surgeon about to inflict the greatest possible amount of agony on another.

“Go to your room, Emmeline !” said Sir Hildebrand ; “I will speak with you to-morrow.” Then, turning to Ruth, he added sternly,—“Remember, you leave this house at dawn.”

Emmeline threw herself, sobbing, on her bed ; and Ruth slipped down stairs, to weep on Lankaster’s shoulder, to upbraid Mr. Smooth, and to eat “a bit of supper,” perhaps for the last time, by Lankaster’s side, and for the last time to sweeten his glass of brandy punch.

CHAPTER III.

THE POOR COUSIN.

EMMELINE had been terribly startled by the sudden appearance of her father. He so seldom interfered in anything connected with her, that his doing so in this instance, filled her with a vague and haunting terror !—Then too, she could not disguise from herself the meaning of the words, which Claude, in his rage and mortification, had addressed to her father. Her heart throbbed, and her cheek flushed, as she remembered the disdain of that father's reply. It was poor comfort to think they would not fight, merely because her father held her lover so much beneath him ! Emmeline was romantic. She had read many novels and romances. She remembered cases in which the revenge and fury of one man had prompted measures that

compelled another to meet him. She forgot that duels are quite out of date; and though the first thought of any man who considers himself insulted is still "pistols and twelve paces," that even Claude in a cooler hour would see the madness of challenging a man of Sir Hildebrand's age, because he would not accept him as a son-in-law. "I'll call you father, or I'll call you out," belonged to a very different state of society; and Sir Hildebrand, of course, would have answered his challenge by giving him in charge.

Of all this Emmeline was profoundly ignorant; and at the idea of a duel between her father and her lover, she grew sick with shame and dread,—shame that such a possibility was owing to her deceit and imprudence; and dread, as busy Fancy stretched her on her ever-ready rack; and visions, now of her father dying—now of Claude dead—were summoned to torture her!... "What shall I do? Whom can I consult? Mamma would take refuge in hysterics, and in sending for Lord Wrexham. I wonder if cousin Mildred is gone to bed. She has, as she says, no knowledge of the world, and no experience in love matters; but she is my cousin, a woman, young, and certainly possessed

of many virtues. I will take counsel of her ! Ruth has already helped to entangle me ; and, of course, now she is dismissed, her revenge, as well as her interest, would make her do all in her power to induce me to marry Claude. I will seek Mildred."

Emmeline rose, took her lamp, left her own elegant dressing room, furnished with all that taste could devise and wealth procure, for comfort and ornament, and passed through the large and almost queenly bed-chamber appropriated to her use, and which looked on the square. It certainly struck her, as her eye fell on all the elegant and costly appointments of her rooms, how tenderly she was cherished—how lavishly indulged ! Her white marble bath-room ; her fairy boudoir ; her toilet table, on which the crystal bottles, with their tops of crusted gold, and jars and vases of the same, were better suited to a duchess than to a commoner's daughter ; the gems sparkling from rings, brooches, and bracelets, valuable but little valued ; the hosts of elegant knick-knacks ; the large cheval, and numerous other glasses, reflecting her long hair, damp and uncurled by the night dews ; her eyes swollen and red with weeping ; and her cheeks

ghastly pale; her generally erect young figure bowed with shame and contracted with terror;— Yes, all these things struck her imagination forcibly and rapidly, as she hurried with noiseless steps across the thick carpet of velvet-pile; and her head asked this question of her heart:—"Is it wise to love this man so well? Is he worthy of the sacrifice he requires? and yet perhaps, it is only by promising to become his wife, that I can prevent a murderous meeting between my father and him. Perhaps Mildred can advise me. My heart faints; my head reels. How miserable I am!"—Miserable! Emmeline Montresor! just twenty-one—the belle of the season—the idol of society—the pet of her family—the only daughter of a baronet with ten thousand a year,—possibly his sole heiress! For her brother was not only delicate, but exposed to the climate of India, the perils of war, and those greater still, of the dissipations and vanities of a "*crack*" regiment.—But though Emmeline had not seen Maurice since his boyhood, she loved him with all the warmth of her affectionate and devoted heart. She never could tolerate the thought, of a possibility, which would have made her an heiress, and which, some worldlings and toadies, judging of her heart by their own, suggested,

thinking to curry favour with her! Indeed, in this, her first great trouble, she thought—"Oh, if Maurice were here, I should not want for comfort and counsel." Emmeline had to climb to the top of the house to reach Mildred Smyley's room. She was the orphan daughter of an elder sister of Lady Montresor's, who had made an imprudent marriage, and been left a widow with nothing to live upon; but, luckily for her, instead of that strong vitality and tenacity of life generally displayed by the destitute, she died a year after her husband.—He had been recently presented to a small living, but had long been a Curate, so poor, that, in order to exist at all, he was obliged to go out as a daily tutor; still he had thought that the little lodging that held him would hold pretty Mildred Meeke also; that tea for one was tea for two—fire and candle the same; and as her choice lay between half of his portion and a sixth part of her father's, (another curate almost as poor,) Mildred Meeke became Mrs. Smyley! He was very kind to her in spite of pinching poverty.—Pinches do not generally improve the temper, but he never visited them on her. She, a drudge in her Father's house, was an idol in her Husband's. He was a truly good, earnest, simple-minded Christian; and just as his wife

had presented him with a little girl, and an old college friend with a living of four hundred a year and a charming vicarage, he caught the typhus fever of a parishioner he was attending as a minister, and died ! Died just as life, so long all struggle and pain, had become all pleasure and repose, and just as poor Mrs. Smyley had accustomed herself to all the comforts of competence and a pretty home, with a lovely garden. Always delicate, she fretted herself into what her poor neighbours called " the decline : " at any rate, she died, leaving a letter to her only relative of wealth and influence, Lady Montresor, once her favourite sister ; and in this letter she implored her to take charge of her little Mildred, who else must disgrace her family by going to the work-house.

Lady Montresor had all a parvenu's horror of poor relations, and considered poverty as a positive crime ; but she had a wholesome dread of the world's opinion. She decked out her Sister's sad story in a few romantic colours, and told it to her privy counsellor, *l'ami de la maison*, the Right Hon. the Earl of Wrexham. He, though so great an aristocrat—and aristocrats are often rather supine—was the greatest of meddlers and busy-bodies. (His mother had

been no patrician, but the most agile of Columbines.) The earl set on foot an active canvass, to get little Mildred Smyley admitted into the Clergy Orphan School, at St. John's Wood ; and when her education was completed, Lady Montresor took her, by his Lordship's advice, on trial, as a companion. Why the Earl of Wrexham recommended this, no one could tell ; but in the true spirit of busy-bodyism, he made it a habit, to call pretty often at the Clergy Orphan School, to see the girl whom his influence had placed there. Little Mildred really thought him the first of created beings, the greatest and most gifted of men, and did not conceal that opinion ; so he took a sort of liking to her admiring deference, and fancied the presence of this young and passionate admirer would take a little from the ennui of the long sittings with Lady Montresor. Begun in vanity, they were now a habit, a habit with her as with him, which could not be broken through, till Emmeline returned from school ; and he set himself seriously to courting, with the view of marrying her.

It was a year before Emmeline left Mrs. de Vere's, that Mildred Smyley was installed at Sir Hildebrand Montresor's as " Companion " to her aunt. Sir Hildebrand himself never interfered

in domestic arrangements. Lady Montresor did not like this plan of the Earl's, but she never dared oppose the wishes of a "Peer of the realm." An earl (in her creed) could do no wrong. He pointed out to her that while all the world would talk, if her niece were a stipendiary in any other family, all the world would laud her for adopting the poor orphan girl; besides which, as Mildred, of course, had been thoroughly well educated, her services as reader, amanuensis, &c. &c., were not to be despised. All ladies of rank and refinement, he observed, required some such person, "half-friend, half-underling;" and here was one whom, it would look so well to adopt, and whom gratitude as well as interest must make so eminently faithful and attached.

There was no help for it. Lady Montresor could not argue the point with the Earl; but she could secretly revenge herself on his protégée, by making her niece's situation as mortifying and uncomfortable as possible: and this she privately did.

Mildred had to bear all the tempers which no lady's-maid would have tolerated. Her room, at the top of the house, was not even as nice a room as Ruth's. But Mildred was one of

the neatest, handiest, and most ingenious of her sex. Lady Montresor having ascertained that though there was a fire-place in this garret, there was no grate in it, made up her mind that the niece, so disliked and so unwelcome, could not enjoy the comfort of a fire; but Mildred found a pair of antique dogs in a lumber-room close by, and made interest with a house-maid for plenty of logs and billets, so that, instead of shivering as her aunt hoped she would, she sate by the pleasantest fire in the house. A counterpane, formed of a sort of mosaic, alias patchwork, of coloured silk velvets, gave beauty to the little bed; and the walls were embellished with her paintings and drawings.

Mildred had plants in her windows, and a cage of singing-birds, and every variety of tasteful fancy-work—(she excelled in all)—made this mean room one of the prettiest in the house. The servants pitied her. They knew that, as Lady Montresor's niece, she could not mix with them; and they thought it cruel, and said so, too, "in her Ladyship to keep her own flesh and blood at such a distance." Mildred had a wonderful art of conciliating a class so omnipotent in all that concerns comfort; and as there is a strong natural justice in the lower orders, they

never saw Emmeline step, in her proud young beauty and bright new attire, into her mother's carriage, to shine at "Opera, Ball, or Rout," and Mildred steal back to her garret *orné*, without some one among them saying—

"Well, I do think it's a sin and a shame—*own* sisters' children, too!"

"Ay," said the cook; "that is making fish of one and flesh of the other."

And Mildred, although it was June, finding the evening cool, was sitting by a blazing wood fire, a tray of delicacies Smooth had sent up on her table, reading a French novel, which Lord Wrexham had lent Lady Montresor. He meant it for Mildred; for little as Lady Montresor imagined it, his Lordship was perfectly aware that she knew no more of French than of Syriac, but he always appeared to think her as conversant with modern languages as most women in "*society*" appeared to be, and as Mildred really was. In Mildred's school the girls were made really to learn what the greater number would have to teach. *To seem* did not do there—it was necessary *to be*.

When Emmeline knocked at Mildred's door, it was fastened; but Mildred rose, opened it, and started when she saw the forlorn appearance of

her cousin—so pale, so dishevelled, and so tear-stained and so care-worn !

“ Come in, dearest ! ” she said, placing Emmeline in her own easy chair, and sitting on a low ottoman at her feet. “ What is the matter ? How pale—how cold you are ! ” and she began to chafe Emmeline’s hands, and then to add fresh fuel to her fire.

“ Oh, Mildred, I am very, very miserable ! ” said Emmeline, vainly trying to keep down her sobs as she spoke. “ You know that Claude Lindsay proposed, and was rejected with scorn.”

Mildred sighed, and then said, “ I know it ! But what is the good of thinking of it ? Poor fellow ! I pitied him very much. But you were not to blame, sweet cousin : it is not your fault that you are irresistible. You did not mould this Psyche-like form, or spin the golden threads of these tresses.”

“ No ; but I tried to please, to captivate, to win him ! and now—— ” Here her tears gushed out afresh, and she rocked herself to and fro in such convulsive agony, that Mildred, laying her hand on her arm, said, in a whisper :

“ Oh ! speak, Emmeline ! he is not dead, is he ? ”

Emmeline shook her head.

"Heaven be praised!" said Mildred. "I never take up a paper, but I fear to see something dreadful about him."

"Do you, then, think him so devotedly, so desperately in love with me?"

"I never saw real, passionate love in any other. But you must not think of that. And now that his father is ruined, and all Claude's prospects blighted, now that all his friends forsake him, and that he is alone with poverty and ghastly want—he that never was alone, and who was from the cradle literally lapped in luxury—you, of course, must forget you ever knew him! You must cut him, as all his other fashionable friends have done! Had he loved *me*, and ever been dear to *me*, he would be a thousand times dearer now; but the poor feel for the poor; outcasts herd together; and the fine lady's companion would lose nothing by following the fortunes, or rather the misfortunes, of the bankrupt's son. Had I been coy before, at the first intimation of this sudden, this hideous crash, I should have been at his side—ay, Emmeline (though I have my pride, too), perhaps at his feet. I would have been his wife, to have the privilege of comforting, the luxury of atoning—too richly blest, too exquisitely

rewarded, if he owned his true wife worth more than a whole world of friends, and poverty with her, sweeter than wealth without her !”

As Mildred spoke, her sallow complexion grew bright, and her large dull eyes, generally cast down, sparkled through their tears.

“Mildred,” said Emmeline, “what you say you would have done, I now meditate doing.”

“You ?—impossible ! You have too much at stake—the sacrifice might be so great.”

“I know I must make a sacrifice, Mildred, but it shall not be of Claude, and the love of his true heart, nor of the passionate tenderness of mine.”

“And the Earl of Wrexham ! Lady Montresor told me his Lordship has at length made up his mind to propose to you, the day after to-morrow !”

“Has he, indeed ? I *should* like just to have the pleasure of rejecting that pompous old busy-body and meddling old coxcomb. But I think I must deny myself that luxury. However, I have resolved on nothing yet.”

“Emmeline, whatever you do, let it not be known that you ever gave me a hint of your intentions ; my situation here is miserable as it is—it would be unbearable then.”

"Be it so. I had much to tell you, but I will refrain. You, I know, with the warm woman-heart which I find you conceal under that icy exterior,—you, Mildred, will *not* blame me. There will be great despair if I take the step I now meditate, but, I believe, if I do *not*, there will be bloodshed! Mildred, I never saw you look pretty before: that flush gives such brightness to your complexion, and such lustre to your eyes! Look at yourself! Look! I do think it would be no sin in *you* to make art imitate that blush. I know 'Mademoiselle,' at Mrs. de Vere's used to say, 'C'est le devoir d'une femme d'être aussi belle que possible. Si la nature l'a maltraitée il faut que l'art y supplée.'" I declare, Mildred, if you always looked like that, and played your cards well, you might catch old Wrexham's heart on the 'rebound,' and dear Mamma would still be linked with the Peerage, though not through me."

"And I believe, Emmeline, that rather than it should be through me, she would have the House of Lords razed to the ground, if she could; but what nonsense! Lady Montresor's 'ugly niece,' her 'pale protégée,' her 'plain companion,' those are my titles, and I shall never have any other."

Emmeline, wrapped in her own thoughts, and perhaps a little egotistical, (as pets, idols, and belles cannot escape being,) did not listen to these remarks. She took her lamp, and kissing Mildred, said "Good night, cousin, I feel a little comforted by this visit to you;" and then she hastened back to her own room.

Ruth was in attendance for the last time. She, too, had been crying—she gave Emmeline a note, and pointed to the Square; she then left the room. "Ring when you want me, miss," she said. Emmeline tore open the note; it ran thus :—

"Emmeline! you heard what passed; you know what must happen; there is but one alternative. I will not give up both revenge and love. I meet your father in mortal combat, unless you agree to be mine; in that case he will be my father, and I cannot meet him except in kindness. To-morrow is your birth-day—you are of age to-morrow. I will allow your father to think what he pleases of me and my submission to-morrow, if the day after the ball to be given in your house, and to which I hear 'all the world' are invited, you will meet me at St. Clement's Church! I will have everything in readiness. Ruth and Lankaster will attend you. If you agree so to

bless me, Oh, my idolised Emmeline ! write one sweet word, ' yes,' and enclose me that turquoise ring you wear on that finger, where I so soon hope to place a holier one. Often in sport have I placed it on my own ; if you send it to me now, I shall, instead of being the most miserable of outcasts, be the most blessed of men. Oh, Emmeline ! I am so ill, so cold, so trembling, between heavenly hope and deadly fear. If you reject me now, you sign the death-warrant of Claude Lindsay."

Claude evidently thought " all stratagems fair in love as in war ;" he knew that from the time of Clarissa Harlowe downwards, the dread of a conflict between men, has ever been a means of making women consent to clandestine correspondences, meetings, elopements even ! He was well aware of Emmeline's romantic notions, and he had seen her cheek grow pale when he had hinted at " satisfaction ;" that satisfaction being, to be shot through the head, whilst firing in the air. In his own mind he must have known no such satisfaction could he in these days ask, or Sir Hildebrand grant ; but Fear is more blind than Love, and Emmeline, under the influence of both, was hoodwinked indeed.

"You sign the death-warrant of Claude Lindsay!" she repeated to herself.

Emmeline shuddered at these words; she approached the window. It was early dawn, a drizzling rain fell; but there, still there, intently watching her casement, stood Claude, pale, spectral, no cloak, no umbrella, of course wet through "Oh, Heavens! he is wet through," she cried; "he so delicate! so subject to coughs, and so likely to die of consumption like his brother." She turned to her writing table, and hastily wrote.

" 3 A.M.

"Go home, *dear, dear* Claude! for my sake go! It is death to you to stand there in the rain; it is death to me to witness it, you so delicate too! Accept the ring and the promise it implies; would I were worthier the great love you have shown for me. I shall contrive, during to-morrow, to send to inquire after you. Rash, naughty, wilful, but beloved Claude! farewell!

"Your EMMELINE."

In this note she enclosed the ring Claude had so long coveted; as he had said, often in sport had he tried it on! Emmeline wore it on the

third finger of her left hand ; it fitted Claude's little finger exactly. It was a very curious ring, for it had been made after a design of Emmeline's own : it was a circlet of alternate very small turquoise forget-me-nots, with diamond centres, and tiny emerald leaves, of no great value, but very tasteful. Having sealed up the ring in the note, Emmeline opened her window. Claude was watching it still. She waved her handkerchief : he approached. She threw him the note, saw him pick it up, open it, and put the ring on his finger. He then kissed his hand to her ; she returned the salutation, and he retired.

Ruth stole into the room, and began to let down and brush the long and abundant tresses of palest gold for which Emmeline was celebrated ; but Emmeline was too agitated to sit still, and soon dismissed her.

"And I am twenty-one to-morrow," she thought, "and Papa and Mamma give a ball in honour of their rebel Daughter, who the very next day, the first hour of her legal free-agency, disobeys and defiesthem in the only important choice and great event of her life ! But how else could I avert a duel ? And after all, they may love ; but no one idolizes me but poor Claude ! They *may* be

reconciled to him ; as a son-in-law, they *must* ; but he could not survive my rejection. How frightful I shall look to-morrow, unless I can get a little sleep to night ; and on such an occasion, to look plain would be a greater crime in mamma's eyes than even the marriage, which to her pride and ambition will seem a *mésalliance*. Poor Claude ! in what raptures he will be ! How he adores me ! Mildred has discovered that. I see she thinks I cannot love him as she would have done, had he been her lover. She will discover her mistake ; she fancies a belle and a fortune cannot love ! One must be plain and poor, to have a heart. When she hears that I have left all—parents, wealth, gaiety, and spurned a coronet, to live with Claude on two-hundred a year, she will be obliged to own that I have married for love.”

Alas ! women exercise an immense influence on each other's destinies ; but for Mildred Smyley, it is probable Emmeline would never have eloped with Claude Lindsay.

Eugene Sue shows his deep knowledge of woman's inner nature, when he makes the cold Mathilde glow at the evidences of Ursule's passion, and the fire of love dart through her own veins, when she learns that Ursule had

kissed his hand. Mildred had not only worked upon Emmeline's tenderness and pride by her estimate of Claude's passion, but she had piqued her into showing that she could appreciate and reward his devotion.—To crown all, she had painted what she could do and feel for such a lover. We are all imitative, young girls especially: what Mildred would have done, Emmeline resolved she would do; and she did love Claude, and had never had even a passing fancy for any other man; but yet, for all that, he had pleaded for two years in vain!

Claude's triumph, which makes his heart glow though he is wet to the skin, and which peoples his little dingy Temple bed-room with visions of fairy land;—Claude's triumph, in obtaining, in spite of his ruin and his late Father's disgrace, the hand of the belle of the season, the great fortune, the daughter of Sir Hildebrand Montresor, with adorers by dozens and an earl in her net;—Claude's triumph, little as he thinks it, is owing not to his black eyes, his high pale brow, or his passionate eloquence—but to Mildred Smyley! . . .

“That man is no man,

If with his tongue he cannot win a woman,” said Claude, in high spirits, to himself, as he roused a nondescript lad, half page, half clerk,

and ordered tea. "Oh, I shall easily talk over the old people," he thought, when at length he laid his head on his pillow; "and with my power of persuasion, my eloquence, I might almost say, and their interest, I may be Lord Chief Justice in time. For I will stick to my profession, however kind and liberal they may be. It is pleasant to exercise a great talent, and they will respect me all the more for it. Oh, I shall not give up the Bar even if her brother dies, and we come into all." So with this resolve he fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

EMMELINE slept soundly and till a late hour—when she awoke, and all the events of the preceding day rushed to her mind, she felt surprised to see Ruth standing by her bed-side, with the cup of chocolate, which, among countless other indulgences, this spoiled child had always had sent from her mother's room, at her waking—and quite independent of the regular breakfast.

Lady Montresor indulged in the same luxury, for Mademoiselle Félicie, her own maid (procured for her direct from Paris by the Earl), was celebrated for her chocolate and her coffee, and so naturally brought it to her lady the first

thing in the morning, that Lady Montresor thought it would be *mauvais ton* to appear surprised—or not to take as a matter of course what Félicie was in the habit of preparing for La Duchesse de Montmorenci and the Marchioness of Hauton. In the same manner Lady Montresor adopted the fashion (so prevalent among the belles of Belgravia) of taking tea while dressing for dinner; and that *is* a luxury and a comfort too, and Emmeline always shared this indulgence also.

“ Oh Ruth !” she exclaimed, “ I am so glad to see you here still ; has papa forgiven you ?”

“ Yes, Miss ! Sir Hildebrand sent for me just as I was setting off—and asked me why I went into the Square. I told him it was my duty to obey you, Miss. He then asked why you went there so late at night ; and I told him you only went to put a stop to Mr. Lindsay’s addresses. So he gave me a five pound note, and said, ‘ I wish you to stop with your young mistress, Ruth. I acted under an erroneous impression last night—when Miss Montresor wakes give her this.’ ”

So saying, Ruth handed Emmeline a letter and a jewel case. Emmeline, to Ruth’s great surprise, opened the letter first. It was as follows :—

“My only daughter and my dearest child!—I am certain I wronged you last night—forgive and forget it. My frank and noble girl could never stoop to a clandestine love affair, although her kind heart might induce her to soften by a few last words the pain of a final rejection. Mr. Lindsay has just sent me a few gentlemanly words of apology, and a promise never to accost you in the gardens of the Square again. I am sorry I was so hasty with him ; but the idea of my beautiful noble Emmeline, with her advantages, her expectations, and I may say her offers, marrying the son of a fraudulent bankrupt, and meeting him clandestinely, put me in a passion which mastered my reason.

“I am sorry for Mr. Lindsay ! and in spite of his inexcusable presumption I will try to do something for him ; but I never liked him—and it is no proof of true love, ruined as he is, to try to work on your pity to sink you to his level. It may be disinterested, but it does not look so. I would not hear of such a *més-alliance*, when his father was supposed to be a second Rothschild. How could he dream any parent in his senses would encourage him now ? Enough of him ! Let no thought of his folly mar this bright day. Hitherto, for reasons I

will explain more fully at breakfast, I have seen but little of you, my Emmeline ! but now I hope we shall know and love each other perfectly. And I look to you, my child, to comfort my declining years, and atone to me for disappointment where I least expected it. I send you a '*parure*,' as Mademoiselle Félicie would call it — the idea is taken from that pretty ring you designed yourself, and which I have often noticed and admired. I hope you will wear my birth-day gift to night.

"May this year, my child, be the happiest and the best spent of your life !

"Your fond Father,

"HILDEBRAND MONTRESOR."

Every word of this letter went to Emmeline's heart, and smote her conscience. The ornaments, too ! Such exquisite turquoises, brilliants, and emeralds, set as forget-me-nots, similar to her ring, and forming a tiara, necklace, and bracelets,—beautiful and unique in design and effect ! Poor Emmeline ! She sent to her father to say that the agitation of the night had so upset her, that unless she kept her bed all day, she could not appear at the ball ; and thanking him warmly for his love and

his beautiful gift, she begged him to make the tea, and send her some.

Soon her father came himself to her bed-side with a cup of tea, Ruth following with a tray. It was the first time in her life he had so condescended; and as he caught her in his arms and blessed her, Emmeline burst into sobs so hysterical, that Sir Hildebrand, alarmed at the violence of her agitation, hastily retired. He knew what reproaches he should have to endure from Lady Montresor, if, through him, Emmeline's eyes looked red at her birth-day ball! So he was very anxious to hush up the whole affair. It soon reached Lady Montresor that Miss Montresor was unwell, and (a wonder for her) not up, though it was half-past ten o'clock!

"Félicie," she cried, "the sight of her ball-dress will make her well; take it to her: present it with my love, and point out all its beauties."

Félicie, whose faith in "*la toilette*" was like that of a devotee in his patron saint, hastened with the cartons containing the mother's birth-day gift to Emmeline's room. And as

"Never did this maid forget
Her sex's pride in being fair,"

soon her heavy and tearful eyes sparkled as Félicie held up a dress, consisting of five skirts

of a sort of white fairy gossamer, exquisitely embroidered, and richly trimmed with celestial blue and silver, made in Paris by the Queen of Modistes. The novelty and beauty of the make equalled that of the material. Blue and white were Emmeline's colours. This exquisite ball-dress was closely copied from one designed by the great Parisian man-milliner, Monsieur M—, for that blonde Empress, and Empress of blondes, "EUGENIE." Only, for her Imperial Majesty, green and gold had been the colours chosen. It was lighter and prettier still, in white, trimmed with blue and silver; and the *cache-peigne*, a head-dress which, adorning only the back of the head, allowed of Emmeline's wearing on her fair young brow her father's turquoise tiara, was in the same exquisite taste as the dress; as were also the elegantly-trimmed gloves, shoes, mouchoir, and fan: the latter, indeed, was of rare beauty and uncommon size, and, when expanded, its rich border of blue and white marabouts waved in, and scented the air.

Lady Montresor was right. Emmeline's thoughts were turned into a fresh channel by the sight of this bewildering toilet.

"My lady advise you, miss, not to get up to dinner, but to have a bath, and some tea; and

let me presite at your toilette. In the meantime, if you do get a good nap, you will be as fresh by de evening as de new-blowed rose. My lady bid me tell you dat de young Duke of Burlington is sure to come, and dat my Lord Wrexham will be here before any body else, to gib advice to my lady."

Emmeline tried to sleep, but there was too much on her mind. What were the Duke of Burlington or Lord Wrexham to her?—what her parents' costly and exquisite gifts?—and what right had she to accept their tokens of tenderness and trust?—was she not about to defy—to outrage them? What right had she to emulate the toilette of an Empress—or rather, after this night, would she ever have a right to wear anything again but cottons and stuffs, with a plain black silk for her Sunday's best? Was not that, the utmost that could be allowed, to the wife of a man with two hundred a year? And could it be, that she was only divided by a few hours (which the ball would make so fleeting!) from all the stern realities of a poor man's wife?

"Oh! but papa and mamma will, they *must* forgive; and then we can return here. And what will all the comforts and delights of this

house be, shared with him ! But if they should not !” . . . At the thought, her spirits sank ; but it was too late—she had now no choice.

While pondering these things, a letter came for her, and a parcel containing a huge and elaborate piece of crochet, in the shape of a counterpane—the birthday present of her aunt Meeke.

Aunt Meeke (Dorcas Meeke) was Lady Montresor’s eldest sister. She was a confirmed knitting, netting, knotting, crotchetting old maid. It is said every woman has a chance once in her life. If so, aunt Meeke’s was yet to come. She had always been very plain in person, cold in manner, and hot in temper. No man had ever coveted her hand, even as a partner in a dance, still less for life. She was very tall, high-shouldered, masculine, harsh, abrupt, and domineering. With regard to men, she paid back scorn for scorn, and rewarded indifference with hatred. Time had not silvered or grizzled her thick red hair, which she wore in a Brutus crop ; nor had he stolen one of the very long projecting teeth that disfigured her mouth. Aunt Meeke generally wore white muslin or black cloth, and a plaid scarf, adjusted like a toga, both in-doors and out.

The Earl of Wrexham had a dislike, amount-

ing to a horror, of "Aunt Meeke;" Lady Montresor dreaded and detested her, for she piqued herself on her candour, under the ægis of which she said things that made people wince. The only being she had ever shown any affection for was Emmeline; and for a whole year she had worked at the counterpane, and spent a great deal more than she could afford, in the cotton of which it was fabricated. It was a most admirable piece of work of its kind; for whatever Dorcas Meeke undertook, she did well. The letter that accompanied this present, was in a bold, clear, masculine hand, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAREST EMMELINE,

"I send you *my* birthday present: others may be more costly, and yet not have cost their donors the time, the patience, and the labour this has me. When you are your own mistress, and rule over the household of an English Peer, as I hope you shortly will, in the long visits I hope to pay you, I shall expect to see this counterpane upon your bridal bed. I know, Emmeline, you will atone to me and to your 'poor cousins,' your aunt Stubbs' girls, for all the studied insults and neglects of your mother. Actually, on your twenty-first birthday, we are

not invited to the ball! Such an opportunity for the girls—such an opening—such an introduction! But my maxim is, if you cannot make people agreeable, make them useful. To you, in confidence, I say, that it is so preposterous in your mother not to have asked me and her nieces on such an occasion, that I shall profess to believe an invitation has miscarried, and shall be here with the four Stubbs girls all the same. Let us see if she will dare to do otherwise than welcome us! Ah! it will not be thus that we shall come to the balls, dinners, and fêtes that will be so tastefully and lavishly given by Emmeline, Countess of——I beg your pardon, dear niece! Hannah Stubbs, the hoyden! has dared to look over my shoulder, and tells me you can bear no jest on the subject. I know you will be glad to see poor aunty and the four dear orphans, who, I dare say, will all marry well, when introduced by you. Farewell till this evening. Your attached aunt,

“DORCAS MEEKE.”

Emmeline groaned! What would become of the proud and desolate old maid when not only all her hopes were crushed, but, unless her parents promptly forgave, perhaps her very small

income diminished by half. "Oh, but in any case, Claude will never wish to touch that," she thought. "He must get briefs, or write a book; or I must make drawings and fancy-works for sale, as destitute heroines in novels always do!" All Emmeline's notions of poverty were taken from novels; she had not the least idea of its realities.

Mademoiselle Félicie dressed Emmeline. "*Elle est rayonnante! elle est belle à miracle ce soir Miladi!*" she said to the anxious mother. "*Je l'ai coiffé comme un ange, et le bleu c'est le fard des blondes. Ah pour être ravissante, il ne suffit pas d'être blonde, c'est déjà beaucoup! Mais il faut être blonde aux yeux noirs! comme, Mademoiselle, c'est beau! c'est rare! ou, blonde aux yeux noirs comme elle! ou brune aux yeux bleus—comme moi!*" she added to herself, trying to believe that her cat-like eyes of sea-green, spotted with rust colour, and her grizzled hair, dyed of a purple black, made her a "*brune aux yeux bleus*," and a rival of "*la blonde aux yeux noirs*,"—Emmeline, the belle of the season!

And it was true, Emmeline was radiant ("*ravissante*"), as Félicie said. The fever of her spirit flushed her cheek, and lighted her eyes, to whose brilliant black, the love to which she was so soon to sacrifice everything, lent a passionate languor.

For Emmeline loved Claude, not with the selfish engrossing passion he felt for her, but with a very deep true womanly tenderness, which made her glory in the idea of giving up all the pomps and vanities, the luxuries and elegancies of life for his dear sake !

But Emmeline was not only a romantic creature privately affianced, and about to be clandestinely married. She was a good, pious conscientious daughter, who till this terrible ordeal (terrible at least, as it presented itself to her mind), had never cost her parents a pang or a tear ! When she thought of Claude she was a heroine ready for sacrifice. When she looked at her Parents, she was a poor, weak, trembling child. Often during that brilliant ball, Emmeline Montresor wished she had never been born ! And then remembering that Claude had no one else to live for, repented of that wish !

CHAPTER V.

THE BIRTHDAY BALL.

ALL balls are very much alike, at least all balls in a certain set. Where people are poor and ambitious, and have to contrive, in order to appear like others, there may be some variety ; but where there is ample wealth, Ball givers are not dependent on their own fancies. One fashion prevails ; one Band is all the rage ; one Confectioner furnishes all the suppers ; one Nurseryman supplies the plants ; and every ball given, is an exact counterpart of that which preceded it, and of that which will follow it. The same abundance of brilliant lights and dull partners—of fresh flowers, and faded complexions ; the same endless succession of small pumps or dress-boots,

and glancing white satin slippers ; of merry music and stupid talk ; of anxious Mammās and disappointed Daughters ; of forced hilarity and real gloom ; of beaux, whose heads, by the present fashion ; are all made to look like those of ugly women, in the by-gone days of Brutus-crops,—Dowagers, grown very fat or very thin, yet dressed like their Daughters. Old beaux, generally much more active, and *aux petits soins*, than young ones, and carrying off the prizes of the matrimonial market, while the young men about town are making up their minds to the “ bore of doing the agreeable.” A few fresh cheeks and hearts full of vague hope or entrancing first love, but many more prematurely blighted by ceaseless dissipation, and hardened by intercourse with a selfish world. An overpowering mixture of every kind of essence and bouquet. An overwhelming sense of glitter and glare. A suffocating want of the “ quantum of hogsheads of air ” necessary to the individual consumption of each man and woman. A weary round of figures executed by people who seem to have neither heads nor heels for dancing. A gorgeous supper, but where the heat and the crush prevent your enjoying anything ; and a return, like a horse in a mill, to quadrille, schottische, or waltz.

Such is a ball in the present day ; and such, in many respects, was the ball at Sir Hildebrand and Lady Montresor's, on the twenty-first birthday of their only daughter. Perhaps the circumstance of its being a birthday ball, gave some little additional *éclat* to its costly splendour ;—the birthday ball, too, of one who would probably be a great match, and possibly sole heiress to ten thousand a year ; the belle of the season too, and not merely a beauty and fortune, but a singularly charming, loveable person.

No ball-rooms ever were more brilliantly lighted, more elaborately chalked, more judiciously ventilated, more lavishly supplied with flowers, or thronged with fashionables.

Lady Montresor—remember, she was a parvenue, and therefore her feelings and her manners had not always

“ That repose

Which marks the caste of Vere de Vere”—

Lady Montresor had much ado to keep down the outward evidence of the inward exultation. Her pride at the unusual muster of the *élite*, lighted her eyes and flushed a cheek which habitual discontent and constant dissipation had rendered not merely pale, but sallow ; and rouge being no longer the fashion, it had been for some

time the opinion of the *beau monde* that Lady Montresor was growing quite plain. Her very light hair (a perfect flaxen) and pale blue eyes, which were very pretty when set off by the lilies and roses of her youth, were certainly extremely “*fade*” and insipid when her skin grew sallow.

On this important night, however, her eyes shone, as they had not shone for twenty years; and her cheeks were as rosy as when “she blushed a bride.” A pretty little *fichu* of ruby velvet and gold, judiciously mixed with blonde, and fixed with pearl pins at the back of her head, prevented that air, *à la jeune fille*, which of all others makes a matron look old and worn. Her dress of white *moiré-antique*, brocaded with gold, and striped with ruby velvet, was very rich and becoming; the jacket, open in front, gave glimpses of a still fair bosom, adorned with jewels, while from the hanging sleeves, softly shaded with blonde, her arms, remarkable for their beauty, appeared to great advantage. She was slenderly formed, and not above the middle height, but a *demi train* gave dignity and importance to her figure. Many of her contemporaries (among the men) agreed that Lady Montresor had taken a new lease of beauty; and some envious old belles remarked that a “*soupçon*

de rouge " had a magical effect on blondes, old and young.

In high good humour with herself, Lady Montresor for once was so with her husband, and exerted herself to make the ball *un succès éclatant*.

Sir Hildebrand Montresor, once the handsomest man of his day, was in high spirits. A new and intense love for, and pride in, his daughter, gave to this ball an interest balls had long ceased to have in his eyes. As he watched her, so lovely, so unaffected, and so apparently unconscious of the admiration she excited, he marvelled that hitherto he had been so little with her, and resolved that for the future she should be his companion, his comfort, his delight. Whenever he met her eyes, (and as he watched her almost constantly, it often happened that he did), the smile with which she met his, was more than once dimmed by tears, and the rose on her cheek deepened and paled by turns. Ah! little did that fond, proud Father, guess, to what inward consciousness of treachery, deceit, and filial ingratitude that tear and that blush were owing; or from what presentiment of evil, and prospective remorse, that sudden pallor arose!

"How could I ever consider her so like her

mother!" he thought. "She is the very soul of sensibility—all heart, all mind!—What a fool I have been to seek hollow companions, false pleasures, and frivolous enjoyments elsewhere, when I might have had so true a friend in my own dear child, and such real delight, and so exquisite an occupation in forming and cultivating that tender heart and noble mind!"

Lady Montresor danced quadrilles; Sir Hildebrand was obliged to devote himself to the card-players; and Mildred Smyley, by her aunt's commands, was debarred from the pleasure suitable to her age, and required to be always in readiness, in case any one was wanted to make up a rubber.

Mildred, in the event of being asked to dance, was instructed to say she disliked dancing, and doated on cards; and as whatever she was obliged to do, it was Mildred's pride and delight to do well, she devoted the energies of her powerful mind, and the powers of her remarkable memory, to the game; and many old stagers, who had despised the idea of the sallow, dull companion as a partner, ended by almost reverencing her as a whist-player, and trying to secure her ever after, as a partner at the rubber.

After opening the ball with Emmeline, Lord Wrexham, who, looked upon as an engaged

man, by mothers and daughters on the look-out, was not very popular with them, joined the whist table as Mildred's partner, and very soon they were winners to a considerable amount. Indeed, as poor Mildred had no salary, and only now and then a five-pound note, given her as card money, it was no small advantage to her that her excellent whist-playing kept her purse in a general way pretty well supplied, without the necessity of asking money of that selfish and inconsiderate aunt, who so cruelly neglected to supply her with funds to dress herself, and never gave her anything to wear, but what was frightfully unbecoming, and only suited to a very old person.

When this gay ball was at its height, a sudden buzz and commotion in the ball room, made Emmeline look up from her bouquet and a reverie in which she was plunged, and she saw a very haggard skeleton lady, the Countess of Beaudesert, introducing to Lady Montresor a young man with an air of importance and distinction; and a young lady near her ejaculated, "The Duke of Burlington!"

Now, Emmeline had never seen *the* Duke, *the* bachelor Duke of the season. He was not fond of balls, and he had been abroad during

all the "at homes" at which she had figured. She felt some curiosity to see this idol of the beau monde ; but the interest with which she gazed at him, was very small, compared with that, with which his Grace fixed his eyes on her.

And certainly nothing so beautiful, or so singular in its loveliness, had never met those eyes, sated with beauty at twenty-two.

To be the belle of a London season, it is not enough to be very handsome—hundreds are that ; a girl must be remarkable, and possess, beside something very striking in person, a great deal of what it is the fashion to call "charm."

Emmeline was very striking ; the large black eyes, inherited from her Father (whose Mother was a Florentine lady), were in curious but very beautiful contrast with a profusion of hair, too light to be called golden, and too bright to be like her mother's, downright flaxen. It was exquisitely fine, silky, and glossy, and of the palest gold imaginable ; so very light, indeed, was it, that it would not have suited any complexion, that was not, like Emmeline's, exquisitely fair, and with a bloom like that of the monthly rose. The deep peculiar red of her lovely mouth came from her father, as did her height. She was decidedly tall ; and so long

and white was the throat on which her small graceful head was placed, that, like Harold's beloved, she might well have been called "swan-neck." In her earliest girlhood she had given but little promise of the singular beauty that now distinguished her. Until the roundness of womanhood matured her charms, her eyes had seemed too large, her throat too long, and her figure too tall and lank ; but, as she appeared at this ball, now that Nature and Art had put their finishing touches to her appearance, she was beyond all doubt "beautiful—exceedingly."

The women envied, hated, and owned her superiority with an inward groan and assumed ecstasy. Men fell in love with her by dozens, and the Duke of Burlington, *blasé* and "used up" as he was, seemed positively surprised and animated as he examined her through his eyeglass.

Emmeline had heard so much of the "Bachelor Duke," that she could not but feel curious about him. However, that interest diminished as her eyes fell upon a regular but nerveless face, of the hue of plaster of Paris, and a tall but shambling figure ; while to her, all but a married woman, what were the title, the precedence, the estates, the prestige, and the

family diamonds, which made him an object of worship to the ambitious and the free.

The Duke of Burlington had a small head, shaped like a greyhound's, fine large blue eyes, capable of fire and feeling, only ennui, late hours, and dissipation had prematurely dimmed them ; his forehead, though somewhat retreating, was white and spacious ; his mouth, shaded by a moustache of pale yellow, was fine : his teeth even and brilliant ; his chin round and adorned by an imperial ; light hair, parted down the middle, in the odious and effeminate fashion of the day ; a very long hooked nose ; long weak-looking back, and long legs ; but with a pedigree and a rent-roll longer than all, he was a positive idol of mothers and daughters.

He immediately turned his long back, on all whom his former notice had intoxicated, and devoted himself entirely to Emmeline. The Duke of Burlington, though naturally far from dull, seldom gave himself the trouble to think, and the consequence was, that he had very few ideas ; but one was, that he was the most important person in the world of fashion. Another, that his every wish must be gratified,—only at twenty-two prematurely *blasé*, it was very seldom he had a wish. Of course there was

about him the unmistakeable air of an English nobleman ; but his expression was often vacant, not to say inane, and dissipation had already left light but indelible marks on his temples, at the corners of his cold-blue eyes, and about his handsome mouth. And yet, one glance from those cold eyes, and one smile from those lips, was coveted, watched for, and recorded by mothers and daughters.

The Duke of Burlington had already figured frequently in the "Chronique Scandaleuse," but he had never been in love ; he had never experienced the delights and the torments of that fascinating passion, which, for a time, fills the most selfish heart with the image of another. Algernon, Duke of Burlington, had always scoffed at "first-love" as a popular delusion.

Love had his revenge—he always has on such scoffers. In spite of his small head, and that his heart, which, naturally capacious, was growing daily narrower and narrower in that worship of "self," encouraged by toadies and time-servers ; and also in spite of his gay life, Algernon, Duke of Burlington, fell, on the eventful night of Emmeline Montresor's birthday-ball, as madly and miserably in love with her as did St. Preux with the Nouvelle

Heloise, Romeo with Juliet, or Claude Melnotte with Pauline Deschappelles.

Emmeline did not like him much, and, on the eve of marriage with another, this costly conquest was valueless to her; but she was proud of the passionate worship of one so idolised. She knew in what estimation the Duke of Burlington was held by those who had hitherto formed her world. She saw the angry, the envious, the despairing glances of the women, the increased and deferential homage of the men, who, of course, imitative as they are, were ready to kneel, where they saw the Duke of Burlington bow.

The Earl of Wrexham, who had long looked upon Emmeline as his own directly he could make up his mind to propose, and who had her Mother's sanction, and, as he thought, only required his own, determined to lose no time. He knew that if the Duke of Burlington conceived a passion for a woman, only to be had as his Duchess, he would not hesitate. What did it matter to him whom he married? He wanted nothing in a wife, but charms enough to fire him with that passion, which would make even matrimony desirable! The Earl of Wrexham, as we have said, was a curious mixture. His father

was a cold, impassive patrician ; his mother had been a sharp-witted, impassioned, active-minded, nimble-footed *danseuse*. The Earl was as proud as his father, and as vain as his mother. He had his father's supineness about his own affairs, and his mother's meddling, prying, busy-bodyism, about all other people's. Our Earl inherited from his mother a small turn-up nose, quick dark eyes, and black hair which once curled crisply and closely all over his head, but now was slightly grizzled, while Time had conferred on him that tonsure which ought to involve the abstinence from all worldly vanities.

In youth, Nature had supplied him with a bloom, which now at fifty-nine he was obliged to borrow from art. A love of effect in dress and attitude he inherited from his mother, and the most singularly and showily-dressed man of his day, was the Earl of Wrexham. The Earl of Wrexham was the first to arrive at the ball, which he opened with Emmeline ; but until the Duke of Burlington's devotion acted as a shoeing-horn (*vide* "Spectator"), his attentions were not very remarkable, nor his intentions very clearly defined.

Mildred Smyley had been by the Earl of Wrexham's desire, permitted to appear. She

was dressed in a rich white silk, which came almost up to her ears. Her fawn-coloured hair was combed off her large sallow forehead, *à l'Eugenie*; and a white wreath, with long white streamers, formed her head-dress. There was no tinge of colour in her cheeks or lips; no gleam of light in her large dull eyes; and as Emmeline looked at her, and remembered the flush and the enthusiasm, which had brightened her almost into beauty the night before, she wondered that such a heavy, dreary, impassive creature ever could have looked lovely and loveable.

Lady Montresor was in high good humour. The devotion of the Duke, the fidgetty empressement of the Earl, the crowded attendance of the *élite*, all were sources of rapture to her; and when Miss Meeke and the four Misses Stubbs were announced (although inwardly ready to annihilate), she received them as if they had been invited, and Emmeline immediately set about procuring partners for her cousins. It was not a very easy task, even for the Queen of the *fête*.

The Misses Stubbs were so unlike anything the moustachiod, bare-throated, lace-cravatted, female-headed, loose-coated, lisping, drawling, stumbling young men of the present day, are in

the habit of languidly asking, "Do you dance? Do you waltz?"

The Misses Stubbs were very much alike—only two were very dark, two very fair. All very fat, quite young—the eldest not nineteen—with cheeks like peaches, whose bloom was heightened by present delight and anticipated triumph, abundant tresses, bright eyes, very white teeth, very red lips, forms very fully developed, the wildest spirits and most astonishing and untiring activity. All these attributes, which had made them popular in their own set, made them terrible to the weak, frail, exhausted beings, Emmeline wished to introduce to them—who had too great a dread of being laughed at, and quizzed—and a sort of notion that they were no matches in any way for such rustic amazons. Emmeline vainly tried "unpaid attachés"—a Cornet, an Ensign, a Curate, a very old beau, and a young boy;—when the Duke of Burlington, who had been watching and following her in a manner very annoying to her, and almost maddening to all his female worshippers, approached her and asked, "If he could be of any service?"

Now Emily had not one particle of toadyism, or rather "flunkeyism" (to use the expressive

cant of the day), in her charming composition — “*Osez partout être vous même*” need never have been urged upon her. She did dare everywhere to be herself; and, in reply to the Duke of Burlington’s question, she smiled as frankly as she would have done on the merest nobody present, and said—“No, your Grace can do nothing for me, unless you would ask one of my cousins to dance.”

“That I will gladly do,” said the enamoured Duke; “if ‘*Il Paradiso*’ is to succeed ‘*Il Purgatorio*,’ I will dance with two of them, if you will reward me with two dances with yourself afterwards. Nay, for that matter, as I see you hesitate, I will throw that terrible old lady into the bargain, and begin with her if you will but agree.”

Emmeline could not help laughing; but checking herself, for she saw the contempt for all present which this proposal implied—“My Aunt would think your Grace’s asking *her* to dance, a mere mockery; but if you will so far honour my cousins, you will make them quite the rage, poor girls! And I have no doubt, though I have hitherto tried in vain to get them one partner, these “free-born Britons and independent members and electors,” will be all anxiety to dance

with those whom you so amiably distinguish, although they had just before so haughtily disdained them."

"Then, it is a bargain," said the Duke. "I dance the next two dances with them, and by way of recompense you dance the succeeding two with me."

"I shall be proud and happy to do so."

"Then, let us shake hands over the bargain."

Emmeline gave him her fair frank hand. The Duke did not release it, but said, "Lead me to your cousins, and introduce me."

While this was going on, Emmeline was, all unconsciously to herself, the object of every gradation of malignant scrutiny. There was something almost wolfish in the glare of the eyes of some Mammas (and Papas, too), whose hopes had been raised by some former futile attentions of the Duke to their prettiest daughters. Some very old, but very spiteful, people were following the movements of Emmeline and the Duke through a magnifying glass—(actual, as well as figurative)—and some black eyes flashed, and some blue eyes languished as they looked on the Duke, but all in vain. He was scarcely conscious of the existence of more than two beings—his all-

important self, and the object of a first, a real and an absorbing passion.

“The Duke of Burlington has cut you—has he not, Euphemia?” said a very haughty, insolent, and spare Countess to a pretty girl, who was watching his attentions to Emmeline, with a changing cheek and almost tearful eyes.

“I don’t think he has seen me yet, mamma.”

“No; for he has no eyes except for that sly flirt, Miss Montresor! And to think that it was *I* manœuvred to get him to this ball; and was fool enough to get you that ruinous new dress from Paris, and to buy you that expensive *parure* of sapphires! I thought, before we started, I had never seen you look so well; but now, I see, you are sadly eclipsed. But, for heaven’s sake, if you wouldn’t be the laughing-stock of society and the talk of the town, don’t look so forlorn! Oh, if I see anything like a tear, I shall be off! Your cheeks are getting pale, and your nose red. I never can sit by a red-nosed sentimentalist. You make a great mistake. The Duke of Burlington evidently likes frank, open, natural manners, or, at least, those that seem so.”

“But he seemed to like me, mamma, at Lady

Rivers's; and perhaps he will ask me to dance presently."

"Good heavens! Emmeline Montresor is actually introducing his Grace to those blowzy belles—those milkmaids—those intense vulgarish, and super-human horrors!"

"They are Cousins of hers, mamma—Country Cousins."

"Country bumpkins!" hissed the indignant mamma. "Love me, love my dog, I can understand, particularly if it is a little exquisite Blenheim, like my 'Cupidon,' or a fairy Italian greyhound, like my 'Sylphide.' But love me, love my Country Cousins!—that is to put a man's sentiments to a much severer test.—Effie, here comes Sir Bullion to ask you to dance: make yourself agreeable. He is a marrying man; the Duke, I firmly believe, is not."

Effie acted on her ladyship's suggestion; she was so glad to get away from the serpent eyes and hiss of her mother, that she exerted herself to please Sir Bullion Brightside, a very wealthy, good-tempered, stout, middle-aged baronet, who wore a *toupè*, and a riding-belt by way of stays. It was an object with Effie to get away from "Mamma" for one dance. It was a greater still to escape her thralldom en-

tirely : both of these objects she effected. Sir Bullion was so charmed with Effie, as the partner of a quadrille, that he asked her to protract that partnership for life ; and Effie, after a long *tête-à-tête* on the balcony, over which an awning was spread, returned to her mamma in blushing beauty, full of new hopes and prospects, the affianced bride of Sir Bullion Brightside, who left her no more that evening.

Meanwhile, Emmeline's influence, and the Duke's good nature—he was good natured—had completely changed the fortunes of the night for the Misses Stubbs. They had been growing very red and very angry, laying all the blame of their isolation and unclaimed hands, on poor Emmeline, who had so exerted herself to get them partners. Miss Meeke was becoming very irate, and was about to propose leaving the ball, when the scene of pain, disappointment, and mortification was changed into one of pride, triumph, and exultation. The Duke of Burlington was introduced to the tallest, oldest, and most showy of “the quartette of horrors,” as Lady Lofty called them. Jemima Stubbs, to whom every eye and eye-glass were directed, was dressed in a many-skirted robe of bright yellow tarlatan. Her jet black hair was wreathed with

Roman pearls, twisted round a plaited coronet of hair, and branches of artificial laburnum hung from the back of her head to her shoulders, intermixed with plaited loops of her jetty hair, caught up with Roman pearls; these cheap and effective beads ornamented her wrists, her neck, and were profusely squandered on her dress; which, after all, was not at all an ill-chosen or an unbecoming one, considering the style of her person and the scantiness of her purse. Jemima Stubbs was a very active and agile, if not a very graceful or fashionable dancer; but it mattered not at all to the Duke of Burlington what she was. He was not even aware that she was doing most elaborate steps, instead of the graceful slide or glide, which is all the modern belle troubles herself to attempt. Her *pas de basques* and *pas de zephyrs*—her *beurrés*, *entrechats*, *jetés*, and *glissades*, were all lost upon him. He had secured Emmeline Montresor as a *vis-à-vis*, and in watching her Psyche-like form and movements, and in the delight of meeting eyes that smiled on him, in reward for his self-sacrifice, he quite forgot to exchange one word or one glance with his enraptured partner. But that did not matter to her. She had learnt to dance in a country town, of an old French dancing-

master, who had not kept pace with the times, or who thought them "out of joint," so lame, to the old enthusiast, seemed all modern attempts at dancing. He had taken great pains with Jemima, and she had spared none herself; and, perhaps, had she lived twenty or thirty years earlier, she would have been considered a brilliant dancer. As it was, she was a perfect caricature; but she was also the partner of the Duke of Burlington,—and that threw a halo round her, and round all she did. All her sisters were now invited to dance by men who, though each a magnate in some sphere of his own, looked up to the Duke, and imitated him—even to a neck-tie or a button. The Stubbs's became (as Emmeline had prophesied) quite the rage. The Duke kept his promise, and danced with the two elder ones. They were not merely *rouge de joie*, as the French say—they were purple with pride and exultation. They called the Duke of Burlington "His Royal Highness," but he did not hear or heed them—that mattered not; he had singled them out from among a perfect mob of "Ladies" and "Honourable Misses." He, the great lion, not merely of that ball, but of all balls. They attributed this solely to their own charms; and so blind, so unjust is

Vanity, they believed that Emmeline had tried rather, to keep the Duke away from them, and would not have introduced him at all, but for his persevering and resolute importunities !

High-born and high-bred beauties, exquisitely dressed, sate scornful and unasked ; while the bright-yellow and sky-blue tarlatans of the Stubbs's were for ever whisking round in *valse*s *à deux tems*, or mazurkas, or seen bounding about in cotillons, quadrilles, or schottishes. They had all come armed with tablets—and who would have thought who saw them the first part of the evening—not a name on the ivory page, and not a creature approaching them—that, before the ball was half over, the Duke of Burlington would figure on those tablets, followed by all the most eminent among the imitative sons of Fashion and Folly ?

It was while the Duke of Burlington was performing the last part of his penance, that the Earl of Wrexham, who had watched the admiration, nay, almost adoration, with which his eyes followed Emmeline, and the smile with which she occasionally encouraged his glance, came to the sudden decision that there was no time to be lost ! He had been dancing with Emmeline *vis-à-vis* to the Duke ; and under the

pretence of showing her a plant he had sent, in honour of her birthday-ball, he led her into a little boudoir, containing only a few shrubs and a small settee. This boudoir, a sort of temple to Flirtation, was vacant. As the window was open, the Earl, who always acted more like the master of the house than a guest, said :

“ Emmeline, you must not sit in this draught after dancing;” and he gently closed the door.

Emmeline took no heed of the action. The window of the boudoir looked on the gardens of the Square ; Emmeline could see a dark figure standing on the moonlit lawn, and she was watching it with intense interest, thinking that, perhaps, it was the form of him to whom in a few short hours she was going to sacrifice, not merely all this brilliant homage and inspiring gaiety, but her liberty, her parents, and perhaps . . . But, no ! it would be treason to Claude and his true love to believe she ever could regret the vanities that now surrounded her !—Was not one whispered word of his, one impassioned glance of his, worth more than all the selfish, half insolent attentions of the Duke of Burlington, or the ridiculous, egotistical condescension of old Lord Wrexham ? And her parents !—when they saw her so happy, would they not forget

the impropriety and disobedience of her conduct in its blessed result, and love the man as a son who was so excellent a husband to their daughter!

The Earl, seeing her eyes fill with tears and mistaking their origin, said :

“ Emmeline, I am sure we are both thinking of the same thing.”

“ If you will tell me the subject of your thoughts, my Lord,” said Emmeline, “ perhaps you may know something of that of mine.”

“ A bargain, fair Emmeline !” replied the Earl. “ I was thinking of Love, and of its sweet object and result—Wedlock.”

Emmeline smiled, and said—“ Well, some such nonsense flitted across my mind just then, my Lord.”

“ Nonsense ! Oh, Emmeline ! you only call it nonsense, because you do not know how much in earnest I really am ! I had intended, as you perhaps know, not to address you on this subject till to-morrow ; but seeing you, sweet Emmeline, so lovely and so loving, I have resolved to offer myself to you at once. I am certain of your parents’ sanction——”

“ Are you quite certain of your own, my Lord ?” said Emmeline, archly.

“ Ah, little tyrant ! you allude to some few

doubts and misgivings I may have had ; for it is not every young girl, however beautiful and accomplished, that could wear a coronet gracefully ; but to-night I see you are fitted to shine in Courts as well as to make Home happy. Emmeline ! my head now gives its fullest sanction to the choice of my heart. We are engaged."

"My Lord, there is one sanction yet required."

"Whose, Emmeline ? I have no Parents to consult : yours will only be too enchanted—whose can you mean ?"

"Mine, my Lord ! And it will never be given ! My head as well as my heart forbid it ! It can never be !"

"On what plea—for what reason ? You think so proud a part too difficult to play. The prospect oppresses you—but fear not. So young, so malleable. . . ."

"Young, my Lord, but not so malleable as you imagine, nor so humble—I think the rank you offer me is one I am well suited for."

"Then why refuse it ?"

"Because to accept it, I must accept you."

"Well, Miss Montresor !"

"Well, my Lord ! I think such a union would be preposterous."

"On what score, I pray?"

"Not *one* score, but *three-score*—you are old enough to be my grandfather!"

The Earl winced, "Scarcely."

"Then we have not one opinion, one sentiment, one habit, one feeling in common."

"But by living together we should."

"No, my Lord; you cannot change, and I will not—let us be friends. I am sure that is a great deal more than we should ever be if we were married."

"Really, Miss Montresor, I do not understand you, in my rank of life a disparity of years is of no moment whatever. Look at the Earl of W., he married Miss——"

"Yes, but she, though so much his junior, was turned thirty. After thirty, a woman's chance is down at zero. Then she had no fortune; her parents were ambitious, of humble origin. I am twenty-one to day, far richer than I wish to be, and of a family which was so noble it refused to be ennobled by patent. What have I to gain? Take my advice and look elsewhere."

The Earl had never cared very much about this match till this evening. The devotion of the Duke of Burlington, the piquante beauty of Emmeline herself, the unexpected difficulties

all roused him. His patrician blood tempted him to draw himself up, and pretend he had only been jesting with "the little friend" and plaything of a few short years back; but that quicker, humbler fluid, which danced in his veins as nimbly as did the celebrated Columbine from whom it came, was only excited by difficulty and warmed by opposition.

Emmeline did not know much of his real nature; she had often found his constant presence a bore, and his meddling in her affairs very inconvenient. She saw that he ruled her Mother, whom yet she fancied he neither liked nor esteemed. Servants, who are always jealous of any but lawful authority, and whose hints and murmurs have a great influence on children's minds;—servants, as long as Emmeline could remember, had hated and feared the Earl of Wrexham. And in her early childhood, one of her nurse's worst threats was, that if she did "so and so," the Earl should take her away. The plan which, on her return from school, she soon detected, of marrying her to Lord Wrexham—and the manner in which he tolerated the notion, aroused her anger and her scorn—that she, in the bloom of youth, the belle of the season, the idol of her family, so well born, so beloved

at home and worshipped abroad, should be in a manner offered to a rouged, wrinkled old beau in a toupé—and he seem to think he should do her an unspeakable honour, if he accepted her!—this was enough to rouse to opposition any girl of spirit, enough to make her say with Tennyson—

“Howe’er it be, it seems to me
’Tis only noble to be good;
Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

One who considered too, that the blood in her own veins, was as ancient and more unmixed than that in the Earl’s—and who, had it not been, had sense enough to think—

“A simple maiden in her flower,
Is worth a hundred coats of arms.”

But, besides all this, Emmeline was in love, in love with a Man only a few years her senior; a Man with a pair of dark eyes full of light and love—with thick clusters of jet black hair, waving above a broad high brow, smooth and white as marble, and which made the Earl’s patent ventilating peruke and wrinkled cosmetised forehead (by comparison) odious—a Man with noble features, black whiskers, brilliant teeth, Byronic chin and throat, and a form which, though not remarkably tall, was commanding

and symmetrical ; but, more than this, the possessor of all these attractions, had known those terrible reverses, which rouse all the natural devotion of woman's nature. He had borne all, because he had not lost her, and she was all the world to him. She loved him with a girl's timid, coy, uncertain love, till he was ruined, and then she fancied she adored him ! And he—oh, there was no pretence, no disguise about his feelings—he was wildly, desperately, madly, in love with her. She was “the ocean to the river of his thoughts.” Upon a tone or touch of hers, his blood would “ebb and flow, and his cheek change tempestuously.”

His dark eyes were ever seeking hers. Whenever they were in company or alone, his voice trembled with tenderness as he spoke to her ; he adored her, and he cared not who saw it. And she, accustomed to be idolized by a very handsome man, young, captivating, and of great intellectual superiority ;—she was to be won by an occasional condescending glance, or patronizing smile, from an old beau of fifty-nine !

We have said his first impulse was to resign and disdain Emmeline—that was his Father in him ; his next was to persevere, to implore, to compel her to love, or, at least, to marry him ;—that

was the Mother in his heart. And so having ascertained, the door was closed, while Emmeline, with her eyes cast down, was playing with her fan, he suddenly gave a bound, (remember, his mother had been a Columbine), and dropped on one knee at her feet.

"Emmeline," he said, "I will not rise till you say 'Be happy.'"

"Be happy, my Lord!" said Emmeline, anxious to escape.

The Earl sprang to his feet and tried to seize her hand; but with the agility of a fawn, she darted to the door, and with a rather mocking, silvery laugh, she said, "Be happy, but not with me. I strongly advise you to remain a bachelor; but if you are resolved to marry, choose some woman of suitable age, and who either shares your opinions or will adopt them—at any rate, who will appear to do so. But I say, remain as you are!"

"One word, Miss Montresor: are you not influenced in your present decision by the evident admiration of the Duke of Burlington?"

"No, upon my honour as a Christian lady; nay, more, my Lord, had I to choose between you," she added archly, "I would rather be Countess of Wrexham, than Duchess of Bur-

lington. So now we are friends ; that is much better than being mated !” and she playfully kissed her hand to him.

“ I feel as if I were check-mated,” said the Earl. But Emmeline was gone ; she was soon flitting through the supper-dance with the Duke of Burlington ; and as his Grace led her down to supper, the Earl of Wrexham had no further opportunity of approaching her ; but he contrived to get opposite to her, and to fix upon her those glances of tender reproach with which old beaux are apt to assail young belles. These glances were a source of great amusement to the young Duke, who had a vein of sarcasm—indeed, few men of a certain class are without it—it is a substitute for wit. At any rate, he made Emmeline laugh, and that delighted and encouraged him, while it angered and mortified the Earl. However, he resolved on a noble revenge. On him, as *l’ami de la maison*, fell the task, as it was a birth-day ball, of making a speech in Emmeline’s honour, and proposing her health.

It was a custom in the Montresor family, to keep Emmeline’s birthday, as the great annual family festival ; and Sir Hildebrand always would have her health proposed, in a set speech by the Earl of Wrexham.

The Earl of Wrexham was dining with Sir Hildebrand when first the birth of a daughter was announced : he had pledged her then in rosy wine and glowing words ; and never since then had he failed to do so, although every year his toast and his speech seemed more old-fashioned and obsolete, and therefore more unwelcome to Lady Montresor. He had been privately engaged for months on this *impromptu* speech—as any one who had access to his blotting book could have ascertained. It was very complimentary, and couched in phrases common to common minds on such occasions. But, strange to say, Emmeline's spirited rejection of himself, had so raised her in the Earl's opinion, and the passion of the Duke was so apparent, while her beauty as she sate *vis-a-vis* to him seemed so bewitching, that he was inspired with a set of new ideas which, couched in language warm from the heart, and spoken with lips trembling with emotion, produced immense effect on the brilliant company, and more than once sent tears to Emmeline's eyes,—tears which the Duke of Burlington longed to wipe away ; but as that was not even to be thought of, tried hard to sneer away—but in vain !

Emmeline not only bowed in grateful acknowledgment to the Earl, but she sent him a very pretty message by Lankaster, who was looking so superb, that an old and hideous spinster of rank and enormous wealth, had, flitting through her misshapen old head, some plans, in case he proved neither vicious nor vulgar, of taking him into her service, educating his mind, polishing his manners, forming his tastes, winning his affections, and purchasing him a foreign title, Count or even Marquis, and then retiring with him into private life.

But Emmeline's greatest trial was to come. Her father had to return thanks, (that was a necessary part of this old-fashioned ceremony). He spoke in a voice occasionally trembling with deep emotion, of the comfort, the blessing, his daughter's affection was to him ! He said,

"She is the friend,
To whom the shadows of long years extend."

He paid a brief, but touching tribute to her filial piety, and guileless character : he spoke of himself, as wrapped up, in her and her happiness, and he invoked blessings on her head, and on her path in life.

Emmeline listened aghast ! She, the disobe-

dient, the undutiful, the deceitful—was it of her, her father spoke so tenderly? from her he hoped so much? Did he so love her? and might not the step she was about to take, break his heart? Yet if she took it not, would not Claude be driven to desperation? The struggle was too severe. The Duke, who was watching her intently, saw a deadly pallor succeed a burning blush, and her eye-lids droop over large gushing tears. She had half arisen with an impulse to rush to her father, and throw herself at his feet. The Duke, not a little delighted at the opportunity, caught her in his arms, as she fell back insensible.

Lady Montresor screamed. Sir Hildebrand, pale with alarm, hastened to his Daughter. The Duke proposed to carry her upstairs; he seemed resolved not to resign her. He ordered Miss Meeke and her nieces, who crowded round, to shew him where her dressing-room was. They were too terrified to refuse, and led the way. The Duke bore her to a sofa in her own boudoir. It was an unspeakable delight to him to enter that room even for a moment.

Miss Meeke, having by this time recovered her self-possession, said, in a commanding tone, "We will do all that is necessary, 'your High-

ness,' and I will bring you word how my niece is presently." She then waived him away so authoritatively that he was obliged to leave the room just as Sir Hildebrand entered it. Emmeline still lay, white as marble, and as cold and quiet, in a death-like swoon.

CHAPTER VI.

MELISSA.

LADY MONTRESOR, who was very unwilling that a sudden stop should be put to the glories of her brilliant ball, came speedily out of the hysterics, into which she had gone, as a matter of form, and to evince her maternal anxiety. After a short visit to Emmeline's boudoir, having ascertained that she was restored to consciousness, and having endeavoured to prevent Sir Hildebrand from crushing her head-dress and spoiling her attire, by his paternal and repeated embraces, Lady Montresor ordered the musicians to re-commence, and taking, with intense inward ecstasy, the proffered arm of the Duke of Burlington, she allowed him to lead her to a sofa in the ball-room.

It did not escape the ambitious and enchanted "Mamma" that His Grace was standing near the door, looking as anxious as he felt, for tidings of Emmeline; and as, in order to hear every particular of the fate of his idol, he eagerly gave his arm to her Mother, she, thus closely linked with a "Duke"—"*The Duke*"—if not of the Country, at least of the Coteries—felt almost a contempt (merely a passing feeling, but very decided while it lasted) for that Right Hon. George, Earl of Wrexham, who had been for so many years the object of her regrets on her own account, and of her ambition on her daughter's.

All who had been bent on retiring before Lady Montresor re-appeared, now took their places in the dance or on the benches, and the ball recommenced with a spirit and a sparkle which might easily have been traced to the champagne.

We have said that Emmeline was not the only person who made a very important conquest on this eventful night. A certain Banker Lord, who was not raised to the Peerage till his youngest daughter was turned forty, and who had at that time two sons and another daughter, died, having been preceded to his new and

splendid family vault by all but the Hon. Melissa Addington. Melissa, in consequence, had inherited a princely fortune. She was a very small and very hideous woman, remarkably ugly even in childhood (which period of life is generally endowed with some charm). An accident, caused by her rebellious and fiend-like temper, had dislocated her spine, and the whole of her youth and early womanhood were spent on a reclining board, when in-doors, and in a sort of elongated wheel-chair, drawn by a footman, when in the air. Of course, as the daughter of the wealthy banker Addington, she had every possible advantage and luxury that wealth could confer; but, with two fine fashionable sons and a handsome shewy daughter to whom to bequeath his colossal fortune, "Melissa" was an object of pity and toleration, rather than of affection and interest.

With very strong passions couched in her feeble and deformed little frame, "Melissa" was well aware, that a sense of duty and justice alone, surrounded her with the luxuries of life. She saw that her Father (her Mother had died at her birth) was very glad of the excuse (furnished by the physician's commands) to send her to distant watering places. He took care

she should have a house and an establishment suited to his great wealth, and he paid her periodical paternal visits. But he was always glad when that duty was over, and her bitter remarks, cat-like face, and crooked form had ceased to annoy him.

Melissa's health, in her infancy and early youth, was very infirm, and frequently severe attacks of illness seemed to threaten a decease, which no one would have lamented. Her temper was so violent and malignant, that nothing but enormous salaries could secure her any personal attendants. She would strike, pinch, scratch, and even bite, in her paroxysms of anger and despair; and when, from debility, she could not leave her *chaise-longue* she would throw anything within her reach at the heads of her attendants.

Thus she grew from childhood to womanhood, and thence to middle age. She was not incapable of love, in spite of her malignant temper. She generally conceived a passion for every new Doctor that attended her; and a young Curate, who had been summoned to her, when it was supposed she was dying, became an object of worship with her. But to the honour of the Faculty and the Church, be

it said, she received no encouragement from Doctor or Divine.

Certainly the general impression was that she was "not quite right," and no one would have supposed that a marriage with her, could have ended in anything short of a criminal indictment.

The Hon. Melissa was at Malvern, trying with an effect, almost miraculous, that kill or cure system, called hydropathy.

The clever and scientific head of that establishment had discovered at a glance, that, in Melissa's case, the mind was more deformed than the person; the *morale* more prostrated than even the *physique*. And so it had been from the time when perception had first dawned upon her mind.—Melissa, precocious in some respects, had discovered that she was ugly! deformed! unloved! The morose and hopeless dejection this conviction had caused, reacted on her highly nervous and hypochondriacal temperament; and the violent fits of rage, both inward and outward, to which she gave way, greatly enfeebled her whole system. The Cold Water Cure at Malvern, in its most rigorous integrity, gave a wonderful vigour to her frame; and a little philosophy, a little flattery, and a great deal of

kindness, sympathy, and amiable interest, lent tone to a mind already become less irritable and imbecile, since bodily pain and debility had given way to feelings of ease and strength. Then at Malvern, people were so full of mirth and kindness, owing to an invigorated state of body (so omnipotent with the mind), that even the Hon. Melissa, accustomed to be hated and shunned, was pitied, cheered, and even sought after. She was already becoming a new creature—so completely are we what others make us !

At this time and at her father's Hall, malignant scarlet fever broke out, and carried off her two Brothers and her handsome Sister (just engaged to a Viscount)—her Father had recently been made a Peer,—the little, forlorn, humpbacked Melissa, thoroughly understood the change in her position, as sole heiress to that Father's immense wealth. He was already a very old man, and did not long survive the terrible shock, and the bitter sorrow consequent on such a loss.

With the sense of her great importance, "Melissa" became a new creature. During her miserable childhood and blighted youth, much of her vicious temper, her envy, her hatred, her fury, and her despair were owing to the conviction that she was not, nor ever could

be, of the slightest importance to any one in the world. She saw that even her Father only endured her, and provided for her, as a duty, in a style which spoke of pride, not love. With two Sons and a beautiful Daughter (his idol) to whom to transmit his immense wealth, Melissa felt sure he would only leave her, a life interest in a sum, large enough to secure her the comforts she had always enjoyed. He would never imagine that she could wish to marry, nor would he make her a bait for some needy fortune-hunter, by leaving her wherewith to buy herself a Tyrant. Melissa, who knew the power of wealth, was often convulsed with inward rage, as she thought that if her Father left her, what, as his child she was entitled to (a fourth of his property), she might still be somebody. As her body and mind grew strong together at Malvern, she had planned an appeal to her Father in a letter so temperate and so convincing, that, as a just and good man, he must have made her portion equal to her sister's, when Melissa suddenly found herself his sole heiress !

We have said that her bodily strength had, during her long stay at Malvern, been slowly increasing, and her passions had been in a great degree mastered by a reason, which already

revolted at the idea of being considered and treated as imbecile or insane. She now shewed no ordinary powers of mind and body. She conciliated public opinion, by founding a hospital for those afflicted like herself. She built and endowed a Church: she subscribed largely to all charities—and she took a noble mansion in Park Lane, and gave the best dinners and the most brilliant balls in London.

The Hon. Melissa Addington had been some six or seven years in possession of health and wealth at the time of her introduction to the reader. She was about fifty, still much deformed; very sarcastic, but very hospitable; and dressed quite à *la jeune fille*. She had had offers innumerable! Every handsome spendthrift, on her visitors' list, looked to her as a *dernier ressort*, and many of them were not a little amazed, after the bouquets and presents which had completed their ruin, had been accepted, to find themselves haughtily and sarcastically rejected!

Melissa had often been in love a little, that was with her Doctors: and once passionately, that was with the young Curate. When she came into her father's princely fortune, she went down to Ilfracombe, where the young Curate

had won her heart twelve years before—the Rev. Paul Smith was still a Curate. Melissa meant to make him an offer,—first of a living in her gift, and then of the giver.

She entered the church with a beating heart. Paul, once so slender and with such redundant jet black hair and fine dark eyes, was grown fat, corpulent, rather bald, very grey, wore spectacles, and had a vulgar wife (a neighbouring farmer's daughter) and six children !

Melissa returned to town directly the service was over.

Since that time, although it suited and pleased her to have all the fashionable idlers, wits, and *bon vivans* in her train, she had never felt any great *penchant* for any one in particular, till the extraordinary beauty of "Lankaster" struck her when he attended Lady Montresor on a picnic given by the Hon. Miss Addington. On that occasion (it was a water-party), Melissa, in getting into a boat, slipped and fell into the river. Lankaster caught her in his arms, and carried her, either in a sham or a real fainting fit, to the hotel close by.

Lankaster had reason to remember that day, for the Hon. Melissa presented him with a Bible, containing a hundred pound note, and a

pocket edition of "The Whole Duty of Man ;" and "Melissa," though she recovered from the severe cold caught in her immersion, never got the better of the *fever* that attended it.

It is but justice to her to say, that she did her best to drive from her fancy that handsome face and form, that earnest deference and dignified humility, the perfection of manner in a Groom of the Chambers—but *en disant il faut oublier on se souvient*—and so it was with "Melissa." She chose to consider that Lankaster had saved her life, and therefore she always took some notice of him, wherever she chanced to see him.

We have said that she was much struck with his beauty, in his gorgeous new livery, on the night of Emmeline's birthday ball ; and it occurred to her, that, perhaps, the best thing she could do would be, by the offer of wages much higher than those Lady Montresor gave him, to get him into her own service. "I shall then," thought the Hon. Melissa, "be able to judge whether his habits and manners, would admit, of his ever being made, not a gentleman, that, of course, he could never be—but a foreign nobleman ; a few hundreds would do that—a German Baron or an Italian Count. If his tastes are not unre-

deemably low and vulgar, and if he has no vices,—I will retire to the continent, purchase him a title, and secure a Husband who will feel grateful to me, which none of these honourable insolvents who look to me, to pay their debts, would ever do. And now to feel my way.”

During the confusion that attended Emmeline’s fainting fit, the Hon. Melissa beckoned Lankaster to approach her — “I hope, Lankaster,” she said, “you read the Bible I gave you, and study your ‘Whole Duty of Man’ at every spare moment.”

“Yes, Madam,” said Lankaster, a great flirt in his way, fixing his fine eyes on her small wrinkled face; “they are my greatest treasure, my only comfort.”

“I hope you understand what you read, Lankaster?”

“I try to do so, Madam—but it is very difficult.”

“Ah, you want some one to explain!”

Just at that moment Lankaster was called, and as in her agitation, the Honourable Melissa had displaced a bandeau of diamonds on which the sit of her wig depended, she resolved to find her way to Lady Montresor’s dressing-room.

Pretty Ruth, seeing a lady on the bed-room landing, came forward to offer her services, and

showed her into a dressing-room prepared for the guests. The little humpbacked Melissa sat down before a glass, and while Ruth re-adjusted the bandeau, she sounded her thus:—"Is it true that Lady Montresor is going to part with that rather good-looking, tall and steady young man, the Groom of the Chambers?"

"Not that I know of, Ma'am," said Ruth, (quite aware of the honourable Melissa's partiality for Lankaster, as it was the common talk and jest of the servants' hall.)

"He seems a respectable, religious young man—but I heard he required higher wages than Lady Montresor chose to give. What may his wages be?"

"About thirty pounds a year, Madam."

"Well, my good girl, if it is true, that he is about to leave, as he would suit me exactly, I would say double that—by the bye, he is not your brother, is he?"

"Oh no, Madam! he is nothing to me—but we came together, and we naturally should like to go together. If Lankaster should leave, I shall give warning too!"

"And what should you say to entering my service? My own maid is going to marry—I cannot have married people about me. I

give thirty pounds a year and all my cast-off dresses."

"I should be proud to wait on you, Madam, in case of a change."

"Well, then, I commission you to sound Lankaster—that is, if he is going to leave Lady Montresor; only in that case. I would never tempt a servant to quit a friend of mine. That will do." And slipping a sovereign into Ruth's palm, she hobbled out of the room.

"Of course," thought the Honourable Melissa, "such wages will tempt Lankaster—he will wait upon me, to offer himself, and the girl's coming too, will prevent any scandal. I can make a hundred opportunities for sounding him, and send her into the country, if necessary. Should he realise my expectations, and prove to possess ambition, gratitude, good manners, and no vices—I'll get him made a Baron, a Count, a Marquis, or even a Prince—and spend the rest of my life abroad, supremely happy."

Ruth's reflections were—"Poor little crumpled old body! she's over head and ears in love with my Lankaster, and no wonder. Well, tomorrow I take him for better and worse. After Miss Emmeline has become Mrs. Lindsay, Miss Ruth Reddy will become Mrs. Lankaster. The

game's up here, of course, and 'tis not very likely the young couple can afford to keep us long. We may make out the honeymoons together; but I dare say that 'll be all; then t'wont be a bad spec to enter Miss Addington's service—glorious wages and no end of perquisites. And we'll keep our marriage so snug, she'll never find us out: if she does, we shall have to leave, that's all; but she'll never dream of such a thing, and if it's true that after a month's marriage, there's no love left on the man's side, Lankaster wont betray himself; and I'm sure I've too much spirit, to be fonder of he, than he is of me."

CHAPTER VII.

SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY.

AT the earnest request of her father, and the almost passionate entreaty of her tearful cousins, the Stubbs's, Emmeline returned to the ball-room, but not intending to dance any more. It was in vain that the Duke implored, that the Earl of Wrexham insisted. Emmeline's pale cheek pleaded for her, and Sir Hildebrand saying he had promised she should not be induced to dance again, and that she had only reappeared lest the ball should come to a premature close, he placed her on a sofa, and the Duke and the Earl continued to vie with each other in attention and devotion.

The Duke of Burlington was full of plans,

pic nics, and parties ; the object of which was to make sure of constant opportunities of seeing Emmeline. His yacht, his horses, his villa at Twickenham, his conservatories, his galleries of pictures, everything he could think of, to put her under some little obligation, to form some link between them, was tried in vain. And Emmeline, sorely against her will, was obliged to play the hypocrite, and talk as if she meant to ride the beautiful Arab he offered to lend her, and to sail in his yacht, and lionise his galleries and gardens ; but all the while she remembered, with feelings strangely compounded of shame, alarm, and passionate delight, that in a few hours she was going to put an impassable barrier between herself and this superb and envied conquest.

The evident passion of the Duke of Burlington would only serve, when she revealed it in true wifely confidence in after-times, to prove to Claude that when sought and idolized by the highest, she had gladly sacrificed Ambition to Love, and everything to him ! As for the Earl, remembering only Emmeline's remark, that "she would rather be Countess of Wrexham than Duchess of Burlington," and forgetting the decided rejection of himself which had preceded

it, he fluttered about her like a singed moth, and tried to throw into his eyes, an eloquence which the champagne he had imbibed had stolen from his tongue.

Occasionally, to Lady Montresor's horror, the eldest, showiest, and most ambitious of the "Stubbs' girls," Jemima, in order to be near the Duke of Burlington, would approach Emmeline, and hang over her, and pretend an almost sisterly affection and familiarity; at one time fanning the now pale beauty, twisting her long loose ringlets—for Emmeline would not have that singular and exquisite ornament, her fine hair, dragged off her face, because an Empress's hair would not curl, or did not become her in curls—and Emmeline was the only woman present spirited or handsome enough to defy a fashion which is fast lowering the character of our Island beauty. The glossy bands or floating ringlets of Englishwomen are as necessary to the style of their features, as is the bloom which gives brilliancy to their eyes and beauty to their complexions. And now, because a pale and moonlit Beauty sits on the Imperial throne of France, and because it suits her finely-marked features to have her hair combed up *à la Chinoise*, our silly countrywomen take as much trouble,

and use as much art, to rob their cheeks of all bloom, and their heads of its greatest ornament, as their Mothers, more wisely did, to cultivate their roses and ringlets.

It is generally remarked how little beauty is to be seen now in English theatres and other public places ; yet, at one time, foreigners were amazed at the display of loveliness wherever a number of Englishwomen met together. The English face, deprived of bloom, and of the softening effect of beautiful hair, is not so very lovely. The women, in the present style, look like insignificant, beardless men, or rather oldish boys. And the men, with their equally unbecoming fashion of wearing the hair parted down the middle (like a Madonna's), appear like harsh and masculine old maids.

What a pity the spirit of imitation should drive Beauty from her stronghold ! Love has always been supposed to lie in ambush among Beauty's locks ; and now they are all dragged off the face, and concealed at the back of the head by an untidy, heterogeneous mass of flowers and streamers.

Perhaps one thing that made Emmeline shine so conspicuously at her birthday-ball, and, indeed, throughout the season, and caused

the eye to rest upon her with so much pleasure, was, that no artifice or blanching cosmetic was used to rob her cheek of its delicate bloom (like the centre of that sweet rose called the "Maiden's blush"), and she was *distinguée* enough to set fashions, not to follow them. Indeed, the Duke of Burlington, to the surprise of the Earl of Wrexham, who had always wished Emmeline to be in the height of the fashion, was observing what fools women were to adopt any style that did not become them; and that he hoped Miss Montresor's beautiful ringlets would produce an entire reaction.

Jemima Stubbs, who had been playing with one of these long floating curls (glancing the while with a sort of tender archness at the Duke, on whom she felt certain she had made a great impression), then said, blushing purple the while :

"Does your *Highness* think ringlets would become me?"

The Duke was about to answer her only with a cold glance, and colder monosyllable; but seeing a blush of shame and look of annoyance in Emmeline's face, and recollecting the near relationship between Jemima and his idol, he said, very good-naturedly :

“Oh! you are quite killing enough already; and any change from what you are would make you less delightful!”

Miss Meeke, who, having a very long wry neck, and a species of hump, very foxy hair, and a dress, which an injudicious cheap dyer, had converted from pale-yellow into dingy snuff-colour, looked “singularly like a camel,” came up in time to hear this compliment, and, of course, quite to misconstrue it.

As the dawn advanced, and the dancing began to flag, the other three Stubbses, emboldened by the apparent cordiality of the Duke of Burlington towards their Aunt and their eldest Sister, joined the party; and so great was Lady Montresor’s annoyance at seeing the sofa which she had meant to be sacred to Emmeline, the Duke of Burlington, and the Earl of Wrexham, surrounded by these blushing, giggling hoydens, led on by her “atrocious sister, Dorcas,” that she, to break up so detestable a coterie, actually herself proposed the Coquette Dance, to terminate with Sir Roger de Coverley.

“As there are so many young people present,” said Lady Montresor, smiling, “and as it is a birthday ball, and therefore a little extra mirth will not be out of place, I propose those old-

fashioned dances. You, Emmeline, must not attempt to join in them, but perhaps the Duke of Burlington will select a partner."

The Duke, of course, resolved to sit out with Emmeline ; and Lady Montresor, determined that the *tête-à-tête*, on which her highest hopes were built, should not be destroyed by Miss Meeke or the Earl, requested the latter to allow her the honour of introducing him to the former as a partner ; and before he was well aware how such a catastrophe occurred, the Earl was leading Miss Meeke to the Coquette Dance.

Lady Montresor soon dispatched beaux in search of her four full-blown nieces ; and, in spite of the nonchalance of the *beau monde*, the music was so animated, the champagne had been so good, and the dance itself was so exciting, that there really was some little fun and spirit infused even into the vapid belles and "used up" beaux of the nineteenth century.

All the oldest, stateliest, and most exclusive of the company had quietly departed : had not Lady Montresor perceived this, she would not have ventured to propose anything so like merriment as to run the risk (in her opinion) of being thought plebeian.

Emmeline and the Duke of Burlington, per-

ceiving the unwonted hilarity that prevailed, drew near, to look on ; and, just at that moment, Jemima Stubbs, whose turn it was to be "*La Coquette*," after disappointing several beaux, suddenly made a dart at the Duke of Burlington, as he stood just outside the dancers, and, by main force, brought him into the circle, and led him back to her place with her.

Lady Montresor was livid with rage and shame. Emmeline was annoyed that a Cousin of hers, should do anything so bold, unfeminine, and unusual ; but the Duke, who was in high good humour, and who, prompted by that love, *qui tire parti de tout*, had decided in an instant how to make the best of the occasion, appeared quite satisfied with his good fortune ; and as Miss Stubbs was the last lady to play *La Coquette*, and with the next round the Gentlemen had their turn and their revenge, he (taking a precedence which no one attempted to dispute), after coquetting with many in turn, and for a long time with the camel-like Miss Meeke, made a sudden dart at the smiling Emmeline, and drew her within the ring ; thus publicly proclaiming her as the object he wished to secure. It was so cleverly done, that Emmeline did not attempt to resist ; and, encouraged by

her sweet silver laugh, the Duke, at the close of the Coquette dance, pleaded so earnestly for her hand in Sir Roger de Coverley, and she felt so much pleased with him for his good-humoured tolerance of her Aunt and Cousins, that she consented, although her Mother shook her head (but very smilingly), and her Father approached, and affectionately implored her to beware of over-heating or over-fatiguing herself.

There are few people of any age who do not feel their hearts and their heels grow light beneath the inspiring influence of Sir Roger de Coverley! Lady Montresor made it a personal request that, out of compliment to her daughter, every one would join; and she herself paired off with an old beau, after Sir Hildebrand had led out the Honourable Melissa Addington, whose eyes wandered sadly after the gorgeous form of Lankaster, as he came in and out with his ices, negus, &c., &c., of all of which she frequently partook, to have an excuse for exchanging a look or a word with her beau-ideal and ideal-beau!

It is not often that such a scene of hilarity, of true-hearted, light-footed, light-headed merriment occurs among the *élite* and in the rarified chilling atmosphere of Grosvenor Square. The higher you get, the purer the air (perhaps), but

the colder certainly. But the blasés imitative exquisites saw the Duke of Burlington—*the Duke—their Duke*, wild with spirits, and flushed with exercise, setting to Emmeline as merrily as a former Duke of his ancient race might have done to a Beauty in hoop and toupé; and so they set gaily, and smiled, inanely, perhaps, but still smiled at the fair of May Fair, who for once condescended to let their feet leave the ground, and to enjoy a dance. There was another fashion which the Duke set *en cachette*, and which they would doubtless have followed too, had they been aware of it. The last time that himself and Emmeline had to bend under the arch formed by the hands of the other dancers, he suddenly and fervently pressed her hand, in a manner so tender and impassioned as not to admit of a doubt that it was meant as “love’s confession;” and though she snatched that hand away, and coloured deeply, while the smile vanished from her lip, he could not believe it possible she could be really offended; at least, it could only be at the idea that he was in jest. “She’ll forgive me,” thought the Duke, “when she understands that I am in earnest, that I love her, that I mean to propose to her. Am not I the Duke of Burlington? and is not she Emmeline Mon-

tresor, a commoner's daughter, but whom I can make a Duchess?"

There was no kind smile for him again, just then on Emmeline's beautiful lips, or in her gazelle-like eyes, but he consoled himself with the idea of how she would smile when she knew all! and he had been so courted, so caressed, so made love to by all womankind, he did not object to a little pride, and prudery too, particularly in his intended Duchess.

The ball came to an end at last, but not till the early sun of May was forcing itself through the blinds, and Beauties—remembering Lord Byron's assertion that

He never saw but one, the stars withdrawn,
Whose bloom could, after dancing, dare the dawn—
began to hurry Mammas and Papas away.

The Duke took an almost affectionate leave of Sir Hildebrand and Lady Montresor, whom, in his own mind, he looked upon as his Papa and Mamma-in-law elect. He did not attempt to take Emmeline's hand, and bade her good-bye with a look and voice of tender reproach, and she, remembering his former kindness, and aware of the shock that awaited him, for she saw he was in love (women soon find that secret out), smiled kindly at him, and said,

with an emphasis he recalled afterwards bitterly enough,

“Wherever I am, I shall never forget all your kindness to my Aunt and Cousins to-night. I fear they sadly bored and wearied you?”

“Nay,” replied the Duke, “I never felt less bored or wearied in my life. I never enjoyed a ball before. How glad you will all be to get to bed. *La belle mère et le beau père*,” he added, taking a hand of each as they stood together, looking a very charming, amiable couple, “must be worn out with their animated hospitality. *Au revoir*.”

Lady Montresor did not know enough of French to attach a meaning which would have enchanted her, to the équivoque of *belle mère* and *beau père*. She smiled because she thought it was meant as a compliment to the personal appearance of Sir Hildebrand and herself, well deserved as she felt it to be, for her own still pretty face was beaming with pride and joy; and Sir Hildebrand, very tall and stately, with a martial air and a gentle dignity of manner, was as handsome, though not as brilliant as he had been, when blushing beauties gave him the sobriquet of “Antinous.” He

had lost the redundant black locks once so much admired, but so fine a head, like Canning's, gained by that loss; and he had those large dark eyes and pale regular features which, united with that classic baldness, seem to be the type of patrician beauty among Englishmen in the meridian of life. Lady Montresor had then no idea that the Duke's words had a meaning which, all vain as she was, would yet have been more intoxicating to her than any tribute he could have paid to her charms.

Not so Emmeline, not so the Earl of Wrexham. Emmeline was distressed at a self-deception in the Duke, which she knew she had certainly fostered, and the Earl felt a vague and angry jealousy, which he subdued by recalling Emmeline's avowed preference of himself.

"I suppose you will all be visible at luncheon to-morrow?" said Lord Wrexham.

"Of course, at least to you, Wrexham," said Sir Hildebrand, "and let me thank you for your touching speech about our dear girl!"

"I wish it had been worthier of her," said his Lordship, taking his leave, "'*a demain*,' or rather '*à midi*.'"

As he passed through the ante-room Mildred Smyley met him, a small book in her hand

sealed up. "Here is that volume of De Balzac you wanted, my Lord."

"Oh! I am in no hurry for it to-night."

"Don't tease him with books now, Milly," said Sir Hildebrand.

Lord Wrexham cast a glance at Mildred, and something in her face made him decide on taking it. "I shall not go to bed," said he, "I shall get into the park and read this book."

"Oh, look, Sir Hildebrand!" cried Mildred, "the sun is rising; how glorious a sight!"

Sir Hildebrand turned to the window. Mildred bowed her head over the hand the Earl extended to take the volume, and as she did so, suddenly, and as if from an irrepressible impulse of deferential affection, softly kissed that hand and was gone!"

"What a strange, simple, impassioned girl that is!" thought the Earl, not a little startled, flattered and pleased. "So cool a head and so warm a heart! and I do believe she looks upon me rather as a God than a Man! *ah pauvrete!*"

* * * *

"Well, this *has* been a triumphant evening," said Lady Montresor, "but, Emmeline, you look like the Castle Spectre. Go to your room this instant! Félicie shall bring you your *bouillon*

when you are actually in bed. As everything has gone off so well, I won't scold you for inviting your dreadful Aunt and obnoxious Cousins ; but—"

"But," said Sir Hildebrand, fondly embracing her, "it was her own birth-day ball, and she had a right to invite any one she pleased, and she shall always ask any one she likes ! What tears, my Emmeline ! Oh, she's quite overwrought, quite hysterical ! Not another word—ring for Ruth, Janey ! will you ?—we shall meet at breakfast at noon, not before ! Even I am quite worn out ; no wonder she, poor girl, is exhausted. Good night, and God bless you, my child ! We must have a good canter to-morrow, Emmeline. There, kiss your Mother, and get to bed at once !"

"Such a night of triumph is enough to turn the head of any girl !" said Lady Montresor to Sir Hildebrand, after Emmeline had retired. "No wonder she is upset. Fancy, what dazzling prospects are suddenly unfolded by this evident passion of the Duke's !"

"Then, is Wrexham to be thrown overboard at once ?" said Sir Hildebrand merrily.

"Why, luckily he has not proposed, dearest ! and what girl would not prefer a Duke of her

own age to an Earl old enough to be her grandfather ? ”

“ Well,” said Sir Hildebrand, “ I don’t think Wrexham will break his heart, for I suspect he never cared about our darling till he saw how much the Duke admired her ; and I must say I always thought it a preposterous match for our beautiful child. But I know Wrexham well ; there’s a great deal of good, and very little harm in him ; and if Emmy *had* fancied him, I should not have opposed her wishes.”

“ Thank Heaven ! ” devoutly ejaculated Lady Montresor, “ I don’t think the subject has ever been hinted at before her. What a mercy she is not in the slightest degree compromised with that old fellow, Wrexham ! ”

And yet, ever since Emmeline’s black eyes and light ringlets had, when she was a little fairy of four, awakened the admiration of the Earl, it had been Lady Montresor’s darling object to see her daughter Countess of Wrexham !!!

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE VERSUS DUTY.

EMMELINE had not intended going to bed at all. It was already five o'clock, and at nine she had promised to meet Claudę Lindsay at St. Clement's Church. He had sent her a message by Ruth to implore that she would do so; and she had allowed Ruth to construe her silence into consent. Ruth was all energy. The trickery and deception of an intrigue was as congenial to Ruth's nature, as it was odious to Emmeline's; and her eyes sparkled, and her cheek was flushed with the excitement attendant on all the artifices and contrivances necessary to effect Emmeline's escape.

But, oh, for Emmeline! her very soul sickened

at the thought of the anguish and disappointment she was about to cause, those fond proud parents, who had never seemed to her before, half so loving or so loveable—so dear, and so endearing!

“And Papa dislikes poor dear Claude so much, and evidently does not believe he *has* a disinterested attachment for me! Oh, if he could but read Claude’s noble, devoted heart! And Papa mixes him up with his Father’s bankruptcy,—that is so cruel and so unjust! and Mamma is so intoxicated with the idea of having a Duke for a son-in-law, her disappointment will be terrible! Ah, it will be more violent, but not so deep as my Father’s. His despair will be not the loss of the Duchess, but of the Daughter.”

“Don’t fret, Miss,” said Ruth, with an ill-concealed exultation very irritating to the conscience-stricken, humbled, terrified Emmeline. “Don’t fret, Miss; it’ll soon be over, and all right again. Your Par and Mar can’t hold out long—’tishn’t as if they had even one more to fall back upon; they have only you, Miss.”

“True,” said Emmeline, starting as if stabbed to the heart; “and that makes my doing this so sinful, so unpardonable.”

“La, Miss, and if you don’t, you’ll see Mr.

Lindsay a corpse ; dragged out of the Serpentine, or cut down from a bed-post, or bleeding to death, or poisoned, or some such dreadful doings. Fathers and Mothers are very near, but the Young Man of our 'art is nearer still. Besides, they 've only to forgive you, and you and Mr. Lindsay 'll be glad enough to come and live with them ; but there's nothing but death for such a true lover as he is, if you deceive and disappoint him. La, Miss ! he, for all it's only a few months ago his Father was counted able to buy up half the nobility, and drove four greys,—he, in order to get a glimpse of you at the ball, was among all that crowd outside, of low fellers. In an old cloak and hat, but looking quite the gentleman for all that,—and he climbed up to a place where none of those nobodies wouldn't venture their contemptible necks, but where he could watch you the whole evening. I saw him when he come down from looking at the grand Ball and fine supper he wasn't even asked to,—and when he questioned me who was the tall, hook-nosed gentleman who paid you so much attention, and I told him the Duke of Burlington,—I do think if he hadn't caught hold of the railings of the Square where I went to speak to him, he'd have fainted

away. But I made him smell my vinaigrette, Miss ; and I told him you only danced with the Duke as a blind ; and that you had no eyes or heart for any but himself, and that it was very wrong of him to take on so, just when you were going to leave all and follow him."

"And so he said I was right, and if you didn't have him this morning, he'd shoot himself through the heart before your very eyes at noon ; and I pacified him, Miss, for he's mad with love. And it's just this, Miss ; if you draw back now, you'll have his blood on your head. You must get into bed, Miss, because of Félicie coming with the soup, and her cat eyes would soon discover if you were not undressed ; but as soon as she's safe off, we'll set to in good earnest. I've got the packing almost done, and Lankaster will manage all about a carriage. You know, Miss, it's our wedding-day too. I could not get Lankaster to help, without promising him that ; but it will make no difference, Miss. Lankaster, in plain clothes, will act as valet to Mr. Lindsay ; and half the maids going are married women, (or ought to be)," she muttered. "There's Mademoiselle Félicie is no more a Miss, than I shall be this time to-morrow. Mr. Smooth has found out for certain she's married, and hiding from

her husband, a terrible fellow, a hair-dresser, and he tried more than once to kill her with the red-hot tongs, to get the keys of the till which she would keep; luckily for her, he's in prison now in Paris, for plotting against the Emperor, and he'll be sent to Cayenne, where the hot pepper comes from, and where Mr. Smooth says he'll be broiled alive—that India's nothing to it."

Ruth might for once have chatted on to her heart's content; after her first announcement that it was her wedding-day also, Emmeline had not heard a syllable she had said. The degradation, the impropriety, the coarseness of this run-away match, never struck her until she found that the step she took so reluctantly, to save her lover's life, a pert Abigail was about to take so lightly, that it seemed almost impossible for her, the daughter of Sir Hildebrand Montresor, the loved and trusted, the only daughter, so carefully educated, so pure of heart and so pious of mind, to carry out a scheme so bold, so unfeminine, so much better suited to Ruth Reddy than to Emmeline Montresor!

Emmeline sat before her toilet glass, pale, cold, and abstracted, lost in deep and painful thought, while Ruth removed the ornaments

from her fair hair and arranged it for the night under her little lace cap.

Passively she suffered herself to be undressed and placed in her bed, and had just turned her face on her pillow to hide the tears that gushed, as she thought it was the last time her head would rest upon that pillow, on which she had for years slept so soundly, and dreamt so sweetly; when Félicie came tripping in with the bouillon, in a small covered silver dish, and a little plateau of "croutons" fried by herself. "My Lady's fond love," she said, with that little accent, which always seems so coaxing and so tender in a Frenchwoman's English: "and I am not to leave you, Miss, till you have taken every drop, and eaten every scrap.—Ah, bon dieu! you cry! if all I hear be true, you cry for joy! Dat brow will become a coronet—a ducal coronet—not an old bon papa of a Earl, but a young fine Duke dhat is someting like! O, my Lady cannot rest for de pride and de joy!, I never see her like dat! She run in and out to Sir Hildebrand, talking, laughing, joking. Well, Mees Emmelene, you must let poor Félicie dress your beautiful blonde hair, and arrange de bridal veil and de orange wreath—I did do it for Lady Clara, and Mademoiselle de Montmorencie. Oh, you

shall look more dan a Duchess, more dan a Queen !
One drop more, and den good night ! Pleasant
dreams and sweet repose, Madame la Duchesse !”

Félicie was gone—Ruth busy in the adjoining room—all was still—all dark, except that dawn was contending with the faint light of a little lamp at the further end of the room ; wearied, over-wrought, and thoroughly exhausted with bodily fatigue and mental excitement, Emmeline fell into a sound sleep. Ruth tripping lightly in, to ask for some directions, found her, to her surprise, in a sleep as tranquil and as deep as that of infancy. She held up her lamp to look at her as she lay, slightly flushed, her long black eye-lashes so curiously and yet so beautifully contrasted with the pale gold of the hair looped up under her cap.

“ Well, to be sure, it does seem a pity she should throw herself away on anything under a Duke ; and to think of one turning up at the eleventh hour, like in a fairy tale ! But if I broke it off, and I believe I could, for a feather would turn her, it goes so against her to elope, (such a dutiful daughter), where’d be the use ! Mr. Claude would certainly make away with himself ; and she’d not marry the Duke after that—she’d rather go stark, staring mad—or

pine herself into a decline. So it's better as it is ! Her Par and Mar must forgive her—they can't help themselves—Ah, at any rate, I have brought Lankaster to the point. At one time, though I know he loves the ground I tread on, he's so much for liberty and so hates matrimony, I thought he'd never pop the question—and as for that, if I was not so doting fond of the handsome feller, it would be better for me he'd left it alone. Mr. Smooth had set his heart on having me ; and he says, he's saved enough to take a first-rate hotel at a fashionable watering place, and keep his wife like a lady. I'm sure Lankaster ought to be very proud of the sacrifices I make. First and foremost, as we can't be married by banns, seeing we've never resided in St. Clement's, I've had to pay for the license and the ring. Let's have a good look at the paper that have cost three pounds odd ! Don't seem worth it ! but it is grand to be married like a lady ! No Reddy ever was married, except her name was asked in church — so vulgar, and 'tisn't the paper, it's the Man's worth all the gold ever was coined, so I won't regret it, that I won't."

"Then, I give up Mr. Smooth, and Mr. Smooth would be as great a match for me as the Duke

would be for Miss Emmeline—and Lankaster as well as Mr. Lindsay, is what my lady calls a ‘Detrimental.’ Like missis, like maid — we shall both perhaps ‘please our eye and plague our heart.’ ”

At this moment there was a gentle knock at the dressing-room door. Ruth rose and went to it. It was Sir Hildebrand.

“Is Miss Montresor asleep?”

“Yes, Sir Hildebrand, sound asleep.”

“Does she seem quite well?”

“Quite, Sir Hildebrand!”

“Then I will not disturb her. Why are you not in bed, Ruth?”

“After putting my young lady to bed, Sir, and putting all to rights, I fell asleep quite sudden, and didn’t wake till you knocked, Sir Hildirbrand!”

“Poor girl! it must have been uneasy sleep, for I knocked very gently. Go to bed at once—we’ll have no more balls for some time; they are destroying your young lady. I shall take her abroad, or to the sea-side, in a day or two. Good night, Ruth. I hope you are very careful about fire.”

“Oh, very, Sir Hildebrand!”

“Abroad! or to the sea-side! (said Ruth to

herself), I wish you may get it! If we do go, we've chosen our travelling companions already, old gentleman; I think I'll let her sleep on to the last moment—she won't care what I pack up or what I leave—and my own things too! they must all go with me; I dare say I shall never put my foot in this house again."

It was broad daylight when Ruth, against her will, and not without some difficulty, woke Emmeline from delightful dreams, in which she was wandering through orange groves with Claude and her father, to all the terrible realities of the step she had pledged herself to take.

Ruth had not Félicie's talent for coffee and chocolate, but she had a good English sense of the value of a cup of hot tea and a plate of delicate toast; and in preparing both she far surpassed her French rival.

"Everything is ready, Miss," she said; "as soon as you have taken this, you have only to dress, and glide noiselessly down stairs."

Emmeline shuddered—she all but groaned.

"Early as it is, Miss, Mr. Lindsay has been several times looking up at your windows—and though he's as white as a curd, he walks so proud and joyful, and his eyes shine like stars."

Emmeline smiled; the vulgar are so fond of

comparisons, always trite and common place, but very expressive.

Claude as "white as a curd," and his eyes shining "like stars," tickled her quick sense of the ridiculous, and "there is a brotherhood, which calm-eyed reason can wot not of between despair and mirth." To this the "*mots*" on the scaffold are owing, and the fancy will sometimes send a smile to the lip, while the heart is sinking under a weight of sorrow. But Ruth was wise in bringing this vivid picture of Claude on the watch, pale with intense anxiety, yet radiant and joyous with hope and confidence, to combat the thousand filial misgivings and maiden tremors of the half reluctant Bride.

"I'm certain sure," said Ruth, "and so is Lankaster, that if you were to disappoint Mr. Claude now, he'd shoot himself there—just where he always stands by the lamp-post. Lankaster thought he saw a bit of a pistol peeping out of his pocket, and said if 'twere he, he'd rather hang himself up to the post—but that wouldn't be half so genteel. Lankaster says, 'twouldn't be so disfiguring an end! You know, miss, he's counted so despart handsome, he thinks more of his looks than of anything else."

Emmeline only took in of all this "bavar-

dage" the idea that, were she to disappoint Claude, he would shoot himself through the heart, and that he had the pistol ready for the deed. This thought lent a wonderful impetus to her vacillating mind, and strength to her trembling fingers and failing limbs; her cheek burned, her eyes flashed. She took mechanically whatever Ruth handed her to put on. She was dressed in a much shorter time than was usual with her when merely making her simple morning toilet to breakfast with her father. And yet this was her Bridal Morning!...

There was nothing stirring, not even an early housemaid dusting about, as Emmeline glided noiselessly down stairs. An irresistible impulse made her look into the Drawing-rooms, and into the "Banquet Hall Deserted." All was confusion, discomfort; faded flowers, trappings, brilliant by the light of chandeliers, but gaudy and glaring in the bright May sun that came pouring in through round holes in the shutters in columns of light, in which the moats and the midges sported. The aspect was dispiriting; it suggested painful reflections.

All had been so arranged by Lankaster that, the hall-door opened with a touch of Ruth's, who, as Emmeline hurried noiselessly out, drew

it behind her with a noise that made her start, and which announced that it was fastened.

Yes! there was no return! To knock would be impossible. It would arouse the porter or Smooth, perhaps Sir Hildebrand himself; and yet, as Emmeline stood on the first step, outside her father's door, she felt as if she would have gladly died at that moment, could she have been carried into his presence, innocent of the filial ingratitude and unmaidenly behaviour which must henceforth for ever be associated with her name.

"The *rubicund* is passed, Miss!" said Ruth, in high glee.

"The rubicon is indeed passed, Ruth," said Emmeline; "the Father's door is closed for ever on the thankless Child!"

"But a Husband's arms are open to receive a beloved Wife," said Ruth as she eagerly led Emmeline out of the Square; and just at the corner of Grosvenor Street stood a fly, and Lancaster standing by it, talking and joking with the driver.

Emmeline Montresor, the belle of the season, the only daughter of Sir Hildebrand Montresor, she of whom the Duke of Burlington is now dreaming such passionate dreams!—she

to whom, at his waking, he will write an offer of his hand and coronet!—she whom the Earl of Wrexham is even now plotting to obtain, and who, by her beauty and grace at her birthday-ball, has “murdered sleep” in the shallow brains of half the moustachioed idlers who beheld her; she, in a simple morning dress, is driving in a fly to St. Clement’s Church, attended only by Ruth Reddy, to be married to Claude Lindsay, son of the notorious bankrupt, with no capital, no income, a hundred or two at his bankers, and nothing between herself and beggary but two hundred a year, left her by one aunt, and of which another, Miss Meeke, has always received fifty!...

CHAPTER IX.

THE IMPERIAL PRESENCE OF LOVE.

THERE is something very like magic in the actual presence of the "loved one." Directly Emmeline stopped at the Church door, and Claude rushed to receive her, and to murmur thanks, blessings, and protestations of unalterable and eternal love, Passion resumed the empire of her heart. Remorse hid itself in some corner, whence it will certainly come forth sooner or later ; but just now that "worm that dyeth not" is coiled up and asleep, Claude alone fills every thought. Father and Mother fade into a memory as he leads her into the Vestry, clasping her hand and whispering fondest words in her ear.

It seems a long time ago that she left her Father's house, and stood so desolate and conscience-stricken outside his door! and Claude was looking painfully interesting and passionately happy. Dressed with a care and an elegance as great as he could have displayed if he had been about to receive Emmeline at that Father's hands in St. George's, Hanover Square, with a Bishop to officiate, Archdeacons to assist, and a brilliant crowd of the élite to look on.

It struck Emmeline then, for the first time, that she might have been dressed more like a modern bride, though not in white *moiré* antique, lace and orange flowers. As it was, she was in white certainly, Ruth had taken care of that; and every dress she had, being made in Paris by the Queen of Modistes, had a style and a finish never obtained in England; but still she wished now, that, "to do honour" to Claude, she had been in more bridal costume.

Her dress was an embroidered French muslin, and Ruth had removed the blue knots of ribbon that fastened it, and substituted white, a small white silk bonnet, over which Ruth had thrown a veil of Brussels lace, and a scarf of the same. Claude, who delighted in an elegant simplicity,

would have been quite satisfied if the bonnet had but been omitted.

To Emmeline's surprise and annoyance, on entering the vestry, she found a party of gaily attired ladies awaiting her, and two gentlemen dressed as for a dinner party. The ladies were Claude's sisters, and a married second cousin, a Mrs. Wheedle Browne. This lady had been a ward of Claude's Father's, and had been, in consequence, on very intimate terms with his sisters and himself. She was some few years older than Claude, but that did not prevent her having been desperately in love with him.

She was slightly known to Emmeline, whom she had met at some of those pic-nics and private theatricals given by the Lindsays, when Emmeline was their school-fellow at Mrs. De Vere's. Those parties at which she inspired Claude with that passion of which the present clandestine marriage was the result; for it is quite certain that it was solely to *his* passion that their union was owing. She loved him but with a quiet and pitying tenderness which, like, the same love of so many young female hearts, would have known no utterance but a sigh, and never in after-life have been more than a half-

pleasing, half-painful memory. That sort of first love to which most women, even, if happy in a second choice, look back ; and while they almost smile at its romance, regret it as the sole glimpse of Fairyland that woman ever has in this world of dull duties and duller pleasures ; —of stitching, nursing, cyphering, dressing, dining, and quarrelling—of births, deaths, and marriages—of many enmities and few friendships—of bitter hates and lukewarm loves !

Emmeline might indeed have said with Julie, “ *J'aurais résisté à l'amour la pitié m'a perdu !* ”

Of course, to the Bride, in her anxious, nervous state of mind, as the run-away Daughter, in her morning dress, and fully expecting only to see Claude (for she felt that a clandestine marriage ought to be at least a private one), it was a very disagreeable surprise to find herself suddenly surrounded by women in the fullest dress and the highest spirits—congratulating her as if she were the happiest of happy Brides—talking all the usual boring common-places about the festive occasion, and the “ happy pair ”—rallying her, coaxing, flattering, joking, quizzing, but evidently bent on making what was to her as much a misery as a joy—a regular fête to themselves.

The Miss Lindsays were fine-looking, clever, amiable young women, with whom Emmeline had (at Mrs. de Vere's) been rather intimate; but as, for two years, they had never met, she felt as if they were almost strangers. Still *they* were Claude's sisters, and she might have been reconciled to their presence; but Mrs. Wheedle Browne!—she felt almost angry at the intrusion of such a person on an occasion of such solemn and painful interest. And to see her there, so elated, so coquettish, so decked out, and at once so toadying and so patronizing, this irritated her so much, that she could not help saying, with some temper, to Claude:

“It would have been kinder, Claude, on an occasion so agitating to me, and where I cannot have any member of my own family present, to have let our marriage be, as we agreed it should be, strictly private.”

“My Emmeline! my soul's idol! I thought you would like to be supported by my sisters, your old friends, your school-fellows, Lizzy and Bella; and you know that they go down to Southampton to-morrow with Mr. and Mrs. Marchmont, who are to chaperone them on the voyage. They sail the day after to-morrow. I could not but ask them to be present to-day,

Dearest. I thought you would like to have them—I did indeed !”

“I wonder, Claude, you could have fancied that, agitated as I must be by contending emotions, and torn by conflicting feelings, I could bear to see any one here but yourself. Still, your sisters I might have endured for your sake and the auld lang syne ; but Mrs. Wheedle Browne, and those two gentlemen !—what can they have to do with such a hurried, private, clandestine wedding as this ?”

“What ! poor Catty ! Oh, she invited herself ! She *would* come ! She fished it all out from Bella, and nothing could prevent her coming. Then, of course, when she came, her husband came, and——”

“And who is that other and very odd-looking person, grinning so rudely ?”

“Oh ! that is a sort of ward of Wheedle Browne’s, immensely rich, and therefore very important to them. He goes everywhere with them. Poor Catty told me she tried to slip away without him, fearing we might think him in the way ; but though he’s not quite right, he’s very shrewd ; and when she stepped out of the carriage, he was at the door to receive her. He follows her everywhere.”

"I wish you could induce *her* to go home, then, Claude," said Emmeline, her colour rising, and tears rushing to her eyes. "I do not think it considerate in you to let me, at such a time, be annoyed by the presence of a worldly-minded woman, whom I especially dislike, and a horrid man, who is idiot enough to stare and grin at me, but not idiot enough, it seems, to be kept in any subjection or restraint."

"What is the matter?" said, in a half-chiding, half-coaxing voice, Mrs. Wheedle Browne, who had a very shrewd idea of what caused Emmeline's displeasure, and the discussion between her and Claude. "I hope you're not scolding poor Claude already, Emmeline—that would be premature. Now, do wait till you've a wife's right to lecture the poor, meek, terrified darling! You won't have to wait long, for here's the clergyman. What a pity, Dearest, you have a bonnet! It so spoils a Bride! Do take it off, and throw the veil over your head. Claude so reckoned on your wearing a veil. He was at my wedding, poor fellow! and was so charmed with my veil and wreath. Do let me, Dearest," and in her officious zeal she tried to remove Emmeline's bonnet by a sort of gentle force—"Re-

member it is the great, the only real fête of a woman's life. Do let me——”

Emmeline drew herself up, and said :

“ You forget, Mrs. Wheedle Browne, how many things must mar this fête to me. I cannot remove my bonnet. I have no wreath, and a veil would be out of character without one. Remember mine is a private, hurried, run-away match ; I wish to get through the ceremony as quietly and quickly as possible.”

“ Oh, but out of compliment to him, poor fellow !” said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, still trying to remove the bonnet.

“ The compliment I have paid him is surely quite enough !” said Emmeline, haughtily moving away. And at this moment the Clergyman appeared, and she was summoned to the Altar.

Emmeline turned deadly pale, and a cold shiver passed through her frame as she stood side by side with Claude at that altar ; and the first earnest words of our beautiful and solemn marriage-service broke on her startled ear, and she realized to herself, for the first time that morning——(since till then she had seemed to be in a sort of somnambulism)——the fact that she was, of her own free will, about to give herself to another—to resign her free-agency to entail

upon herself a host of solemn duties and awful responsibilities—to make herself the responsible trustee of another's happiness—the bond slave of another's will.

The Officiating Minister, a young man apparently in very delicate health, but of the most earnest and solemn character, had features so pale and spiritual, that he seemed scarcely of this earth; and in tones of such deep and mournful exhortation, that they seemed almost a warning, Emmeline heard him say:

“Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this congregation, to join this man and this woman in holy matrimony.”

At these words she stole a timid glance at Claude, and saw his beautiful dark eyes gleaming upon her with such fond prideful love, that her own misgivings vanished at once; torturing regrets about Home, Father, Mother, and all the happy irresponsible existence of girlhood, passed away; one thought, like Aaron's rod, swallowed up all the rest. She read her Husband's love in his eyes, and her own responded. She felt she was a Wife; and she inwardly vowed she would be a good one. She prayed that she might be to him the helpmeet, the blessing, the crown that

the holy Women of old were to their Husbands ; and her tears fell fast, but not bitterly, when, with almost passionate earnestness, Mr. St. Ange, the Clergyman, uttered the words—" Look mercifully upon these thy servants, that both this Man may love his Wife according to thy word, as Christ did love his Spouse, the Church, giving himself for it ; loving and cherishing it even as his own flesh : and also that this Woman may be loving and amiable, faithful and obedient to her Husband, and in all quietness, sobriety, and peace, be a follower of holy and godly Matrons. O Lord, bless them both, and grant them to inherit thy everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

Mr. St. Ange, unlike most London Divines, went slowly and earnestly through the whole marriage ceremony, including the closing address, beginning—"All ye that are married."

After all was over, a few words of congratulation passed his pale lips, and Claude embraced his Wife ! Emmeline could not damp the beautiful joy of his face—his voice—his manner ; and she smiled through her tears, and accepted, with easy affability, and good humour, the felicitations of those present, even of Mrs. Wheedle Browne, who seemed to be trying hard, by the

coaxing pity of her words and tones, to make "poor dear Claude," as she called him, think himself a victim, and not what he felt and proclaimed himself, the happiest and luckiest fellow in the world.

During the ceremony, Mrs. Wheedle Browne had placed herself as near as possible to Claude, and had greatly annoyed Emmeline by her loud sighs, sham sobs, and sonorous "amens ;" and directly it was over, before he had had time to embrace his Bride, she had thrown her arms round him, and said—"God bless you, poor dear Claude !" in a tone that implied—"may he have mercy on you !"

"How beautifully he behaved," she added ; "I never saw a poor dear Bridegroom get through it so charmingly. Wheedle did not give her away badly, did he Lizzy ?" she added, to Claude's elder sister ; "but she's so dull—so inanimate ; it was like giving away a statue !"

"Hush," said Lizzy, "and remember all she has gone through this morning, and how sore her poor heart must feel about her Home and her Parents. I thought she would have fainted when the words 'who giveth this Woman to this Man' reminded her, whose office *that* naturally was !"

"Oh, well," said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, "I noticed her then, and I thought all that very affected, and I am sure it was put on. The Man may tremble a little, when that question reminds him of all that the fine gift entails—the domestic thralldom—the tyranny of temper—the milliners' bills—pianos—perambulators—and all that Man has to provide, for the creature whom nothing in a general way, can prevent from hen-pecking him. But the Woman, at the moment of being given away, she feels that the object of her life is fulfilled. She must be protected and supported, come what will. From a dependant of a household, she becomes its mistress; and she can never be an old maid!"

"Ah, that's all very true in ordinary cases; but Emmeline Montresor has left the realities of opulence, and even grandeur, for the probability of poverty, the possibility of want, and obscurity. There is nothing but sacrifice on her side. She, it may be truly said, *has* married for love: and don't forget, Catty, that the two hundred a year, which is all the newly-married pair are certain of, is her fortune, not his."

"And if it were two thousand a year, I should still consider Emmeline the gainer by the match. Poor dear Claude, how beautiful he looked! As

for her, it's the fashion to admire her, I know, but I could never see why. In the first place, I always think very fair people are odiously insipid."

"But then, she has such an exquisite bloom, and such magnificent black eyes. She is the very reverse of insipid, I'm sure."

"Oh, as to her bloom, it's all the fashion to be pale, particularly for blondes; and then black eyes, with light hair, always remind me of a white cow!"

"Well, Juno is called ox-eyed by the old poets; and whatever she is, Claude is desperately—madly in love with her."

"Ah, so he thinks, poor fellow! But what's going on now? Why don't we set off?"

This whispered conversation took place in the vestry while the names were being signed, and whence Ruth, having told Emmeline that she hoped she would honour her nuptials by her presence, proceeded to the altar with Lankaster. Ruth's being also a sort of run-away match, the Clerk had to officiate as her Father, and give her away.

Ruth was all delight,—rosy with joy and pride; but the superb Lankaster was (as Bridegrooms so often are) rather out of humour. He was aware that his marriage was also a funeral...

The funeral of his liberty. And it had struck him forcibly, at the very moment of giving himself to Ruth, that it was very much like "throwing himself away."

The wrinkled little face and crumpled form of the Honourable Melissa Addington, intruded on his fancy between him and his delighted triumphant Bride. On one side he saw Age, Ugliness, Ease, Pomp, and Luxury, a noble home, and an abundant table, exquisitely appointed, laden with dainties, wine, liqueurs, and spirits, *ad libitum*, and a footman behind his chair. On the other side, Youth, Love, Prettiness, if not Beauty; a life of labour or servitude; a large family; a little wretched home—tea, and a red herring, on a table without a table-cloth; and Ruth grown lean, cross, and slatternly, with a tenth baby at her wretched bosom. No wonder the pampered, selfish, menial was in no very good humour. It was Ruth's will, rather than his, that they should be married off-hand: and Ruth had made sacrifices too; but Ruth's love was Woman's love, and she only gloried in her sacrifices.

That very morning, Mr. Smooth, who seemed cognisant of everything (no one knew how), had accosted Ruth, while she was taking a very early

breakfast, alone, in the Still-room, and when she thought that Mr. Smooth and all the other servants were fast asleep in their beds.

"La, Mr. Smooth," she exclaimed, "how you startle one. I declare I thought you were fast asleep."

"Ruth, I'm wide awake," he had replied; "much more so than you imagine; and before it is too late, let me have a little serious conversation with you."

Ruth saw he was armed with certain documents, to prove to her that his realised fortune amounted to eight thousand pounds. He told her that he was in treaty for a first-rate hotel at Brighton. He added that it was folly in him, perhaps, to have such a "hankering" after a "gal" who'd snubbed him for the sake of an idle, lounging, "lazy, 'eadless feller," like Lankaster, who'd no right to take a Wife, since he couldn't keep her, and would use her like a "Turk." He brought forward many proofs of Lankaster's extravagance, selfishness, and, alas, inconstancy! but the more Smooth ran him down, the more Ruth cried him up. The interview ended in anger on both sides. Smooth vowed if Ruth married Lankaster, he'd make her rue it, only that the "feller" himself would

save him that trouble. Ruth decided that she would risk it; and added, tauntingly, "If I do please my eye and plague my heart, Mr. Smooth, 'twont be your fault, you know."

"And it sha'n't be my fault if you don't curse your own folly, Ruth, in refusing a man well to do, who loves you, and would keep you like a lady, for a feller who, before a year's out, will beat you like a dog!" and so they parted; but Ruth, while looking delightedly up at her handsome Husband as he placed the ring on her finger, had felt a little startled at seeing, partly hidden by a pillar in the gallery—the stealthy form, and shining bald head, of respectable Mr. Smooth. There was great malignity in the glance he gave her; and as Ruth had intended to keep her marriage a profound secret, and had promised Lankaster to do so, she felt a little nervous at the idea that his enemy was cognizant of everything, and might some day or other use his knowledge to the detriment of herself and her Lankaster. Ruth wisely decided not to tell Lankaster of the presence of Smooth, and certainly the news would not have improved the ruffled temper of the handsome lacquey.

"How kind of your poor dear Claude," said

Mrs. Wheedle Browne to Emmeline, "to let you wait for these people to get married. Wheedle has such a horror of married servants ; he dismissed my maid directly he found she had even a follower."

"Oh yes," said Bella, "but he said you asked him to do so."

"Well, I did, because I knew he would do it, in any case, and so I prevented his doing anything that seemed unkind, or ungracious ; that is always my policy. I am so afraid any one should say a word against poor dear Wheedle ; and as to a lady's maid, it is a luxury I deny myself on principle ; in fact, I deny myself all luxuries on principle—and now these people are married at last, Claude, I suppose you must go in the carriage with Emmeline. Have you told her, Dearest, that I have a poor little quiet wedding breakfast ready in her honour ? We live almost close by, Emmeline, in Norfolk Street ! not a very fashionable locality, but it suits dearest Wheedle, and therefore I try to like it."

Emmeline, who detested the idea of a *déjeuner* on this occasion, and who thought Mrs Wheedle Browne an odious and dangerous person, declined, saying, "she wished to leave London at once."

"But poor, dear Claude !" said Mrs. Wheedle

Browne, "if *you* are going to live upon love, I dare say *he* is ready for something much more substantial. Come, Emmeline, I know he wishes you to honour the little collation I have prepared on purpose for you."

"Do, dear Emmeline," said Claude, "I know you will."

"You know," said Mrs. Wheedle Brown to Emmeline, "he might say you *shall*; and if he did, to a fond wife it is a positive luxury to obey."

"And as I think you assert, Mrs. Wheedle Browne," said Emmeline, "that you on principle deny yourself all luxuries, so I presume you never obey."

Mrs. Wheedle Browne shot a serpent glance at Emmeline out of her long black eyes; but (resolved on gaining her point) she only laughed, and said "Very fair! I'm glad to see you merry at last, Dearest; but if you could disobey *him*, I know you cannot disoblige us all. It would be such a pity to make all my little preparations of no avail. I should feel so hurt, so mortified!" and tears of plausibility stood in her eyes.

"Come, Dearest," said Claude with the least shadow of a shade of authority in his voice.

“Catty has always been like a sister to me, and therefore I am certain you will act like one to her.”

“You shall have your wedding breakfast at my house, my good friends,” said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, going most graciously up to Ruth and Lancaster, “No. 1, Norfolk Street. Claude, will you lead your Bride to the carriage?—we will all follow.”

Emmeline swallowed down her tears. She longed to be out of London, and the reach of Mrs. Wheedle Browne. She fancied she could not breathe freely, till she was miles and miles away from her deserted Home, her injured, insulted, outraged Parents.

In a new scene,—by the wild sea—alone with Claude, she might begin to feel some pleasure in her new existence. To forget the Daughter in the Wife—in vain! in vain!—to resist any more, would be ungracious; and sick at heart, Emmeline arrived at Mrs. Wheedle Browne’s.

CHAPTER X.

THE MESALLIANCE.

To Emmeline, accustomed to elegance and refinement as to an atmosphere which she inhaled unconsciously, everything at Mrs. Wheedle Browne's was (she scarce knew why) distasteful and repulsive. Yet the house was one of the largest and best in a street which, a hundred and fifty years ago, had been a fashionable one.

Mr. Wheedle Browne was an agent to an Assurance Company, and had offices attached to this house, in which he lived rent-free. But for this, his restless and ambitious little wife would have contrived to remove their establishment to some more fashionable quarter, for it certainly was a locality unrecognised even by the "Aspiring

Class." But she was a curious mixture of cupidity and ambition; and as the former feeling generally predominated in her very narrow mind, the Wheedle Brownes resided in Norfolk Street.

Wheedle Browne was a quiet, musing man, indolently good-humoured, and naturally just and kindly. Had he been of an active temperament, he would have been very clever—for he had talents of a high order; but he wanted energy and activity to turn them to account. He was a tall, massive, dark, and very handsome man—but his fine eyes were generally half asleep—and his herculean proportions grew stout from inaction and good living, before he had reached middle life. He was full of prejudices—all inactive people are, they are too lazy to combat them. And one of his was,—that Woman was an inferior animal, born only to minister to Man's comfort, and to obey his will.

This was an hereditary notion of the Brownes; but, in spite of it, his adroit and active little Wife, opposing energy to his sloth, and cunning to his strength, ruled him completely, and had everything her own way. Of her, it might indeed be said, that she

" Charmed by accepting, by submitting, swayed;
And had her humour most when she obeyed."

Catherine, or as she was generally called, "Catty Wheedle," was a manceuvrer from her cradle, and a diplomatist in her teens. She knew she had no fortune, although her father was reputed rich; and at twenty-one, being very pretty and very unprincipled, she made Mr. Browne, who was very much smitten with her, believe that she was an heiress (she was an only daughter), and propose for her, a thing he would not have done for worlds—had he been much more in love than he was—if he had not felt convinced that she was a very great catch, besides being a very pretty, pleasing person.

Old Wheedle was only too glad to get her provided for. He declined (as he well might, poor fellow!) paying anything down with her, but said, with tears of plausibility in his eyes, "I don't want to bribe any man to rob me of my only treasure—I'm not long for this world, and I'd rather keep Catty with me. But if she *will* run away from me, when I die she'll come into everything I have on earth—but I'd rather not part with her, and certainly sha'n't part with Catty, and several thousands too."

Mr. Browne reflected that if his wife's fortune were paid down at the marriage, it would have to be settled on herself; but if she came into it

after, it would be his absolutely—so he married her.

The farce was kept up for a year or two, and Mr. Browne added the name of Wheedle to his own—by sign manual.

At length, Mr. Wheedle died, and then it came out that he had long been insolvent, and that his estates were all heavily mortgaged—of course his daughter must have known the real state of his affairs. But she cried, and coaxed, and pretended to be surprised and shocked beyond measure; and her husband, seeing that no good could come of convicting her of her trickery, forbore to investigate matters. Nay, to his honour be it said, he never reproached her with it, and behaved as well and as liberally to her, as when he looked upon her as the heiress of annual thousands.

Perhaps this was, because it struck him, that, if she had manœuvred, it was to obtain possession of him as a husband; and that love for his person might have prompted her deception.

She was decidedly pretty in her early youth; of a Jewish style of beauty, which never lasts, but which, while it does, is very effective. Her eyes and hair were very dark and very fine; her features certainly were a great deal too large,

but they were regular and pliant. When she became thin they were masculine, and almost gryphonesque; but while she had the *embon-point* and bloom of youth, they did not appear too much marked—and she was a decidedly handsome girl when she became Mrs. Wheedle Browne. She had great confidence in herself—and both the chin and the resolution of the first Buonaparte. Like him, she was short of stature, but, like him, she carried herself so as to make the most of her figure, which, down to the waist, seemed intended for a tall person. If her objects had been great, she would have been a Heroine; but as they were very small and paltry, she was generally looked upon as a Time-server and Manœuvrer. Indeed she planned and plotted, coaxed, and canted, as much to get a seat in a carriage or a ticket for a ball as some ladies do to get their Husbands into the Cabinet, and their Sons into the Guards. Her manners were far too much, what the French so expressively call, *caressant*. She had the coldest heart, and the warmest manner possible; but she hated all Womankind, and had a positive and active enmity, to all of her own sex, who were admired or beloved by the other.

Before she fell in with Mr. Browne, it had

been the great object of her life to captivate Claude Lindsay, who, though some years her junior, was at that time the only Son and Heir of a reputed *Millionaire*. But it was not merely for the sake of his wealth that she so plotted, planned, and intrigued, to inveigle him. If not capable of love, she was of passion, and she had a real passion for Claude Lindsay;—indeed she had, by dint of her dark-eyed glances, her coaxing words, her soft sighs, and unceasing attention, begun to make some little impression on his vanity (if not his heart); when an interview with her Father convinced her of the necessity of an immediate marriage with some one. Claude could not be brought to the point—Mr. Browne could; and her hopes of Claude as a Husband were ended by her marriage with another; but she still wished to be admired and loved by him as a friend, a sister! She coveted the first place in his heart, and had it for a time. It was some years later that he met Emmeline Montresor, and fell desperately and miserably in love with one whose aristocratic beauty and dignified grace made “Catty Wheedle” seem very plebeian, artificial, and even vulgar.

Catty saw at once that Claude’s first evening with Emmeline—(poor creature! she was present)

—had destroyed the delight of her life—and she hated her. She would have hated one so lovely and beloved in any case; but she hated her with a tenfold hatred, now that Claude had no eyes, no thoughts but for her.

How bitterly Catty's thoughts reverted to that dreary day, now ten long years ago, when old Wheedle, fearing an *exposé*, and Catty, seeing she had no time to lose, had turned from Claude Lindsay, then heir to a million, (whom she adored,) to Mr. Browne with five hundred a year, for whom she did not care a pin, but whom yet it cost her a great deal of trouble and trickery to ensnare.

And it was in the house of this dangerous, scheming (and at heart inimical) woman that poor Emmeline was to partake of that wedding breakfast, which ought to have been spread in her own dear elegant home, and presided over by her fond Father and Mother.

How close — how dark — how plebeian, to Emmeline, seemed the dingy drawing-room in which the guests assembled, and the more dingy dining-room where the collation was spread.

It was a very sultry day, and the sun came in glaring and staring at the old discoloured wainscoating, which, white in former times, was

now almost olive with time and smoke. It was low water, and the river smelt like a drain, while the breezes that came from it, met a hot air from the Strand, infected with a thousand villanous odours oppressive in the extreme.

Oh! for the fragrant zephyrs that stole in from Grosvenor Square, through the spacious conservatories and lofty apartments of her father's mansion! If Claude had taken her at once to some little cottage-home in the country, where she would have seen none but him, she would not have felt as she did at this bitter moment—that her romantic love-match was a miserable *mésalliance*!

“Now do take off your bonnet and mantle, Emmeline, and make yourself quite at home,” said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, as she led the Bride up into her own room. “Oh, I do hope we shall have a very pleasant, sociable day. Poor dear Claude! I'm sure *he* requires something to cheer him! Ah, I little thought Claude Lindsay's wedding breakfast would be spread in Norfolk Street, and that but for ‘Sister Catty,’ (as he so loves to call me,) he'd have no wedding breakfast all. Oh, what a change for him! Ah! you never saw that palace they had at Twickenham! To think of the luxury, the splendour he was

born to, poor dear fellow! and now. . . Ah, well, it's all over now! While he was single, there was hope that with his person, his talents, his great advantages.....but what's the matter?"

"I feel rather faint. It's very hot!"

"Oh! you want your breakfast, of course. It isn't quite ready: but if you'll excuse me for a few minutes, I'll go and hasten them. Felix Featherstone is in the kitchen—that's his great delight, poor fellow!—but when I'm not there the maids set him up to all sorts of pranks; and, I dare say, that's the cause of this delay. When I'm there, he's a very great help."

"Who is he?" asked Emmeline, (in order to say something,) standing at the open window, and gasping for air.

"Oh! he's a ward in Chancery, not quite insane nor idiotic, but odd, nervous—requiring care. As with all I can do, we cannot make both ends meet (our family increases so fast), I put an advertisement in the 'Times,' and Felix Featherstone's guardians answered it. We have three hundred a year with him, and he's the best creature living!"

"And did Mr. Wheedle Browne like you to do this?"

"Oh! I didn't ask him, poor dear! If he doesn't like Featherstone, he likes the money; and I take all the trouble and all the responsibility, so I'm sure he needn't complain. I should advise you, if your parents don't make you a suitable allowance pretty quickly, and if Claude doesn't get briefs (and no young barrister does), to advertise for just such a boarder—they're very profitable. And now I'll run and look at the table, and come and fetch you in a minute."

"Advertise for just such a boarder!"—the words grated terribly, on the refined, aristocratic ear of the belle of Grosvenor Square. And yet, if her parents did *not* relent, and if Claude did *not* succeed, what were they to do? . . . Oh, how her heart sank, how her cheek burned, and how the large tears would gush from her eyes, as she stood gasping for breath, at the grimy window of that old, dingy house! She had thought of throwing herself on the bed. Alas! the counterpane, which was clean for Norfolk Street, looked very dark and smoky to eyes accustomed to the snowy purity of the coverlids of Grosvenor Square. She turned to the washing-stand, longing to bathe her burning, tear-stained face in cold water. Everything was

inlaid with soot, and a colony of blacks floated on the greenish fluid contained in the ewer. She took off her white kid gloves, and saw that where her fingers had touched the window-ledge, they were positively black. A shudder of horror passed through her frame as she stood before the dingy toilet-glass, and a gust of wind coming in at the same moment, countless black specks fell on her face, her bosom, and her white dress.

"Oh, that we were away from this odious place!" she thought, vainly trying to shake them off—vainly, because in the dust of the Strand there is a greasy ingredient that makes it very adhesive—she was obliged, after all, to return to the uninviting washing-stand, and had just succeeded in removing the traces of tears and "London blacks," when Mrs. Wheedle Browne, in spirits provokingly joyous and triumphant, reappeared.

"Ah, that's right!—a good wash is so refreshing and so necessary here. We have only been here a few days, only since I contrived to get poor dear Wheedle this agency, and the house goes with it. When we've been here another month, you won't know the place. I'll have it thoroughly cleaned, painted, and papered, if I do

it myself! There sha'n't be a black to be found! I couldn't set about anything, till poor Claude's marriage and his Sisters' departure for India were off my mind. Now I shall get regularly to work. The breakfast is quite ready, and poor dear Claude says he's famished. Oh, we've had such a scene! Poor Featherstone! he took advantage of my absence to do all sorts of strange things in the kitchen. He's been kissing the other Bride, your maid, and treating them all to wine and spirits, and I know not what; and he has given the Bride five pounds. He really ought not to be allowed so much money; he makes ducks and drakes of it. Sometimes I can persuade him to let me keep it for him, but not always. Yesterday he had a hundred pounds, and I've been so taken up with this wedding, I don't know what he's done with it. But I see a great rocking-horse for Charlie, that must have cost five pounds, and a splendid wax doll for 'Catty,' and a coral and bells for 'Babie,' and a gold watch and chain for me. So provoking!—I've got a watch already. If he wanted to make me a present, there are many things I want more than a watch. Oh! he's mightily smitten with you, Emmeline; and he's been out to the jeweller's with Miles, and has

bought you a beautiful guard ring ; and then he, it seems, went on to Covent Garden for a bridal bouquet, and he's waiting on the landing, poor simpleton ! grinning from ear to ear, and looking like such a poor dear fool ! waiting till you come out to give you the ring and the bouquet."

" Oh !" said Emmeline, " call Claude to come and give me his arm. As Mr. Featherstone is not quite sane, I'm rather afraid of him : human beings are so terrible when there's any deficiency in their reason."

" Oh, don't be afraid of poor Featherstone ; if he's ever so obstreperous, I can make him mind. Poor fellow ! he was very clever once, and a girl he was in love with, promised to have him, if he took a high degree ; so he studied night and day. He was at Oxford ; he got a first class, and hurried off to claim her hand. She had forgotten all about him ; and as he rushed up to her door, she passed out with her Bridegroom to get into her carriage, and set off on her wedding-tour. The shock was so great that he fell down insensible at her feet. A terrible brain fever ensued, which ended in what they call 'softening of the brain.' Since he has been in this state he has come into a large pro-

perty. He is not quite imbecile; and sometimes he is so sensible, that Wheedle thinks he might manage his affairs himself; but I am not of that opinion; and I will take care the poor fellow is not thrown on the world to be robbed and perhaps murdered. Come, Emmeline, don't be so silly! He's as harmless as a dove."

Emmeline, thus urged, went down stairs. Mr. Featherstone no sooner saw her, than with a sound, half giggle, half squeak, he came forward, offered the beautiful bridal bouquet, of flowers, all white and all deliciously fragrant, put on the third finger of her left hand, close to the little hoop of gold so recently placed there by Claude, a beautiful guard ring of brilliants, and then suddenly kissed her cheek; and shouting out, "Well done, old boy! she's a bonnie, bonnie bride!" he ran down stairs and seated himself, grinning and blushing, at the breakfast table.

The *déjeuner* Mrs. Wheedle Browne had provided, though very fair for Norfolk Street, was not very tempting to Emmeline, accustomed to Gunter's exquisite collations abroad, and to the master-pieces of Monsieur Adolphe, her father's *chef* at home. Sir Hildebrand was extremely

liberal and unusually hospitable, and was universally recognized as a first-rate Amphytrion. Mrs. Wheedle Browne was very economical, not to say stingy. She had very little pocket money, and whenever she gave an entertainment of any kind, she got Mr. Wheedle Browne to give her what the refreshments would have cost at an ordinary confectioner's, and then, by making the greater part of them at home, she contrived to pocket a pound or two. A miserable device, but for which she was not solely to blame. Some men never seem to think that women require money—they object to credit, storm and stamp at a bill, and yet grudge a wife a small stipend for inevitable expenses. Every man who does this, pays for it one way or the other. Mr. Wheedle Browne paid both in cash and credit, for his dinners and suppers cost him as much as other people's, and yet exposed him to a world of ridicule. On the present occasion, he had wished to give an elegant collation. He had a great reverence for Grosvenor Square, and a glimpse he had once had of Emmeline Montresor at the Caledonian ball, had made him think nothing could be too good for her wedding *déjeuner*.

The sum he placed at his wife's disposal

would have provided a very handsome breakfast ; but he forgot that Catty wanted a new dress, bonnet, and mantle for this occasion ; and as she piqued herself, on seeming to him, to be very smart on next to nothing, the money he had given her, furnished not merely the wedding breakfast, but a gay, flimsy, flounced silk from Oxford Street—a showy bonnet from the same locality, and a mantle of imitation lace.

Mr. Wheedle Browne was very unobservant—indeed, he was generally in a reverie. As he never touched pastry, jellies, creams, or cakes, and Mrs. Wheedle Browne wisely covered hers with flowers, (since, like all home-made things, they were not very inviting to look at,) he was not at all aware, what unsightly and distasteful failures were palmed off on his friends. Custards that *would* turn to curd, and taste burnt ; jellies that nothing could make clear or firm ; pastry that seemed cut out of plaster of Paris, and cakes heavy as lead ! Mrs. Wheedle Browne was in a little extra flutter on the eve of this occasion, for she had ventured to try her hand at a wedding cake, which was to supply the place of one her husband had given her three guineas to purchase ; she had iced it too, or at least attempted that triumph and test of a good confectioner ; for,

to do her justice, nothing daunted her, when her energies were quickened by the idea of saving and pocketing a few shillings. She had ever present to her mind the axiom, that the secret of success was that contained in three letters, T. R. Y. Nor did she scruple to box Felix Featherstone's ears, for she was in fact a terrible vixen, when, with something of the fun of his better days, he said, that four letters would sum up the result of her experiments, F. A. I. L. However, Felix Featherstone had actually helped to make this cake; he had beaten up the eggs, pounded the sugar, pared the lemons, blanched the almonds, stoned and chopped the raisins. It was ludicrously melancholy, to see a man who had taken a first class at Oxford (with all the little remnant of mind a woman's faithlessness had left him,) entirely engrossed by this cake. His anxiety when it came out of the oven was intense, and his disappointment terrible. It had not risen, and the icing was a complete failure; but Mrs. Wheedle Browne answered him very sharply, when he said almost crying, that "It would not do!" and had it put by in the pantry, to be covered with flowers on the wedding morning. Before going to Church she had herself stuck it full of wall-flowers and daffodils, purchased for a

trifle at the door, and on descending to the kitchen, when she left Emmeline in her room—what was her horror and indignation to find Mr. Felix Featherstone cutting up this identical cake for the Bride and Bridegroom below stairs, Mr. and Mrs. Lankaster, and all the servants partaking of it! In a violent rage, which she feared to betray, and therefore turned away to conceal, she rushed into the dining-room. The place this home-made cake was to have filled, was supplied by one of the most elegant and costly that ever adorned the *déjeuner* of a Duke's daughter.

Mrs. Wheedle Browne was half-pleased, half-vexed. "What a sum Featherstone must have paid for that superb cake!" she thought; "but how grand and liberal it looks! The poor dear fool never says a word about what he gives or buys, so Wheedle will think me a better manager than ever; and poor dear Claude! he will be quite touched. Now I'll fetch the silly, lack-a-daisical, moping Bride."

She looked up; Felix Featherstone was peeping in at the door, half-afraid she would be angry, for she held him by a very tight rein; however, as she only smiled and put her finger on her lips, he grinned with delight, and began capering about the room.

Certainly a very different effect was given to the *déjeuner* by this superb, tasteful, and towering cake. But Emmeline, as she gazed at it, and thought in whose presence it ought to have been cut, could not repress her emotion—she tried hard to do so. She knew it seemed thankless and ungracious; she saw Claude's eyes fixed reproachfully and entreatingly upon her; but the more she struggled for composure the more agitated she became, and at last, burying her face in her handkerchief, she fairly burst into tears! . . .

"Emmeline!" said Claude, "this is cruel—this is most unkind to me and to our host and hostess."

"Indeed I cannot help it! indeed I do not mean to be ungrateful, Claude!" sobbed Emmeline; "but with the sight of that wedding-cake, came the thought of . . . Papa . . . Mamma! Oh! what must they feel at this moment?"

"But, dearest," said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, "a Husband comes before Father or Mother—at least, he ought to do so."

"He does!" said Emmeline, as a deep sigh from Claude smote upon her ear and her heart. "Forgive me, dearest Claude, it is over now!"

but they have ever been so kind, so devoted, so indulgent to me."

"And shall I be less so, Emmeline?" said Claude.

"Come," said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, "Emmeline is smiling now ; no one takes any notice of a Bride's tears, they are like April showers. Let us take a glass of wine all round, and Wheedle, dearest, make a pretty speech, and propose the health of the Bride and Bridegroom !"

Mr. Wheedle Browne obeyed—he spoke well and feelingly. Of course every word went to Emmeline's heart ; every wish that her cup of happiness might overflow, reminded her whose cup she had filled to the brim with a slow poison. Every compliment to her as a Wife, made her shudder at the thought of what she had proved as a Daughter ; and when he wished her every blessing earth could give, she pined in her inmost heart for her parents' blessing above all !

Emmeline bowed to Mr. Wheedle, to express her thanks. She did not dare trust herself to speak, but Claude rose to return thanks. His voice, deep and musical, trembled with emotion, his cheek was very pale, and tears stood in his dark and most beautiful eyes.

After thanking Mr. Wheedle Browne and his charming "Catty" for their hospitality and friendly zeal, and complimenting the former on his graceful speech, and the latter on her generous hospitality, he alluded to the presence of her Sisters and their approaching departure for India, the *El Dorado* of matrimony, in playful style, and then he said—

"Bear with me if I seem selfish, egotistical, for how *can* I speak but of what fills my heart, that God of Egotists, Love? This is a family meeting, or I would not speak at all; but I know you, to whom I am so dear, will bear with me, for you sympathise with me. I feel I ought to thank you, and I feel, too, that I cannot do it. When the heart is moderately full, the words will flow easily; but when it is thronged as mine is, with gratitude, joy, rapture, delight, love, and a thousand feelings attendant on these enchanting passions, utterance is impeded by the crowd of exquisite sensations. You have wished me happy—I am happy!—happy beyond my wildest dreams! and who that sees the Eve that is to make the world an Eden for me, can marvel that words are poor to paint such joy as mine! All who see my Emmeline, admire her; all who know her, love her! Peerless as is her

bloom of beauty, I am less enamoured of her face than of her heart—less captivated by her form than by her mind! Friends! you knew me at the summit of prosperity, but you never saw me elated by wealth. You have seen me suddenly beggared, but you never saw me saddened by poverty. One thing alone could elate me—Emmeline's love! One thing alone depress me—Emmeline's sorrow! And she *has* a sorrow—a beautiful, a holy sorrow—in the idea that, for my sake, she has offended her fond Parents.

“This sorrow flings a shadow over this, to me, radiant day; but I will bear with it, soothe her, comfort her. Her thoughts are rather with the Parents who love her so well, than with the Husband who will love her better still; who pledges himself before you all, to devote every power of his mind, and every energy of his nature, to her happiness. I have passed through the wilderness, I have reached the promised land! I have obtained as the Wife of my bosom, the first and only love of my heart, the idol of my fancy, the queen of my soul! And you, dear friends, are to me dearer than ever, because you are mixed up with the triumph and rapture of this day, and

have supplied to my heart's darling the place of a Brother and a Sister. I pledge myself, in the presence of you all, to love and cherish her as woman has seldom been loved or cherished ; and if I should ever bring a tear to her eye or a pang to her heart, remind me of this hour, and I will own I am false, futile, and forsworn ! Friends, I thank you. Emmeline, darling ! —Bride !—Wife !—I bless you !” . . .

There was much of selfishness and egotism in this speech, but there was a great deal of passion too. Emmeline was deeply affected by it. The devotion, the worship of such a heart, was worth much, she thought, and she raised his trembling hand to her beautiful lips and kissed it before them all !

Mrs. Wheedle Browne, crimson with suppressed emotions of envy, hatred, and wounded vanity, had hidden her face in her handkerchief. When Claude so boldly proclaimed that the Wife of his bosom was the first, the only love of his heart, she felt convicted, in the presence of her Husband, of a deliberate falsehood ; for, with the short-sightedness of deceit and vanity—never dreaming it could be disproved—she had often told him that she had spurned Claude for his sake ; had preferred Miles Browne with five

hundred a year, to Claude Lindsay when reputed heir to a million !

She stole a snake-like glance at her Husband. He did not respond to it. She breathed more freely. She hoped that, plunged in some reverie, for he was a dreaming sort of man, he had not noticed it. The deep colour that flew to his face at the words of Claude, might have destroyed that hope.

Wheedle Browne was fully alive to her vanity and falsehood on that occasion, but he dreaded a scene, abhorred an explanation, loathed a quarrel of any kind. His mottoes were, "Least said, soonest mended;" and "Anything for a quiet life;" and his consolation, that all her falsehood sprang from love to him. "Poor thing!" he thought, "she feels it was a regular take in, and no wonder she wants to make me pleased with my bargain."

By the time Claude had ceased, poor Felix Featherstone was sobbing aloud; indeed, his excitement became so great, and his manner so odd, that Mrs. Wheedle Browne insisted on his taking a strong sedative, and retiring to his room. He refused and resisted, at first; but she had a look which he thoroughly understood and never disputed. No keeper

ever awed a downright madman more completely by his look, than Mrs. Wheedle Browne did Featherstone by hers.

The little Wheedle Brownes, all dark, plain, disagreeable children, had come in for cake and wine; and the eldest boy, about nine, was quietly commissioned to summon Sampson and see Featherstone to bed—a task he readily undertook, as he loved to domineer, and was a complete little Jack-in-office. One snake-like glance, and one little hissing whisper of “Catty’s,” convinced him resistance was vain; and Featherstone was very docile, and did whatever his young tyrant ordered, without a murmur.

Sampson was half Mr. Featherstone’s keeper, and half Mrs. Wheedle Browne’s footman. The success of the advertisement she had put in “The Times,” had emboldened her to try another. Her first had resulted in the acquisition of Felix Featherstone, who was so rich and isolated—having no relations at all—that no one cared much what he did with his money, as long as he pleased himself—for all the Court of Chancery did, was to see that he was not robbed or neglected—and he was a perfect god-send to Mrs. Wheedle Browne; but he had not been long in the house before she discovered that,

though generally docile, he had moods and fits in which it was absolutely necessary to have some strong man, accustomed to the insane, to coerce and control him. To own this to Mr. Wheedle Browne, would have been to secure Felix Featherstone's immediate removal.

One night, Felix Featherstone, after dinner, was sitting by Mrs. Wheedle Browne, winding silk for her—she wisely made him very useful—the children, six in number, quiet as mice, had all learned their lessons for school the next day, and were seated at tea, and Wheedle Browne himself was fast asleep in an easy chair—he always slept from dinner till tea-time. There really was some cleverness and good generalship in this little cat-like woman—cat-like because, beneath the soft velvet of her coaxing manners were claws, not merely sharp but venomous, and retractile as any tiger's;—we say she *was* clever, for there she sat with three girls and three boys, (at tea too) ! between the ages of two and ten, with about half as much to eat as they wanted, and what they had, of a quality similar to work-house or prison fare, with Felix Featherstone playing many of the unconscious antics of the half imbecile, and their hungry eyes fixed upon him, as he often had cakes and comfits to dis-

tribute ; and yet the quiet and order were so complete you could hear Mrs. Wheedle Browne "Stitch, stitch, stitch, band, and gusset, and seam,"—she was an inveterate stitcher—and you could hear every deep inspiration of her somnolent lord.

The rod and the whip had a great deal to do with this marvellous state of things, but the cruel, cunning glance of her black eye had more. For the smallest offence the rod was freely administered to the girls, and the whip to the boys. In consequence, they grew up very obedient and docile in her presence, but at heart very sly, cruel, and tyrannical ; they fawned upon and kissed the hand associated with such stinging pain, and burning degradation ; but it was terrible to think how bitterly, in their crushed and blighted hearts, they hated that small bony hand.

A mother's hand should be associated in a child's mind with all, gentle, tender offices. Some hearts can almost melt themselves away at the memory of that dear hand now mouldering in the dust ! Not so the little Wheedle Brownes. If they had been asked in the Palace of Truth what objects on earth they most dreaded and hated, their answer would have

been, their Mother's terrible black eyes and small bony hand.

But she was strong in Solomon's authority, "Spare the rod, and spoil the child." She knew not, or cared not to know, that there are two ways of spoiling a child. Softening is bad, hardening is worse ; as soon as her babies escaped their long clothes, her system commenced, and the indolent, unobservant Wheedle Browne was scarcely cognizant of this all-potent rod and whip, so quietly and so secretly were they used, and so well were the little victims aware of the double number of stripes that awaited any noisy demonstrations of anguish. But on the evening to which we allude, no sound was heard from the tea-table. Mrs. Wheedle Browne worked, Mr. Wheedle Browne slept, Mr. Felix Featherstone wound silk.

Presently a barrel-organ in the street, sweet and plaintive, struck up, "The light of other days ;" unluckily it was a song which poor Felix Featherstone's beautiful and heartless Intended had been in the habit of singing to him ! It was the first song she had ever sung him, and the last too ! A curious gurgling noise in his throat made Mrs. Wheedle Browne look up. He rose, his eyes were on fire, his hair on end, his teeth and hands clench-

ed, and there was foam on his lips. She had wonderful nerve, had that little cat-like woman ; with one gesture, obeyed on the instant she motioned the children out of the room—with one stedfast look fixed on Felix Featherstone's eyes, as she went close up to him, she completely mastered him—she seized him by the arm, he did not resist, took up her candle, and led him to his room at the very top of the house. All the time she kept her terrible eyes fixed upon him ; she took from a closet a straight waistcoat ; he allowed her to put it on. She pointed to the bed ; he rose and laid down upon it. She took a bottle and glass from the mantel-piece, and administered a strong dose of a sedative she always had at hand in case of an attack of this kind ; she then left him to seek further assistance, for she feared Wheedle Browne would wake and miss her. She fastened the door on the outside, and writing a note to the family doctor, desired him to send some suitable person to watch Mr. Felix Featherstone, who had been much excited throughout the evening. All this she did composedly, as if she had been herself a keeper at Bedlam.

No sooner was she gone, and the strange influence of her snake-like eye removed, than

Felix Featherstone rolled off the bed, fell heavily on the floor, rose, dashed his head against the wall of his room till the blood gushed from his nose, ears, and mouth, and till one stunning blow produced a short fit of insensibility. He was just recovered from it, had by a violent wrench released one arm, and was on the point of hurling himself from the window, when Mrs. Wheedle Browne stole noiselessly up stairs, followed on tiptoe by a keeper, and the doctor himself.

A minute later, and Felix Featherstone would perhaps have been a corpse on the pavement outside.

"I must leave your patient in your hands, doctor," said Mrs. Wheedle Browne, "and I must beg you to depart as quietly as you came. I do not wish my Husband to know he is subject to such attacks, or he would insist on his removal; and that would not suit my plans."

"Nor mine," thought Doctor McFee, who foresaw a profitable patient.

Quietly Mrs. Wheedle Browne returned to her work; quietly the doctor left the house; and quietly the keeper watched the poor maniac, who, stupified by opiates, and stunned by his self-inflicted blows, lay in a state of torpor all night long.

When Mr. Wheedle Browne awoke, he said,
“Where’s Featherstone?”

“Gone to bed with the headache, darling.”

“And where are all the children?”

“A-bed and asleep, dearest.”

“What, is it very late?”

“Not very; but they were all so sleepy; and ‘early to bed, and early to rise’—you know the rest. Besides, one saves so much fire and candle by early hours. Have you had a nice nap — not been at all disturbed, dearest?”

“No, Catty, you certainly are a model Wife; and ours are model children. How you keep such order, so gentle as you are, I cannot imagine. Why, I remember, four of us at home made the house like a bear-garden! and here, with six, I never hear a noise. Kiss me, Catty—you are a prize!”

“I am glad you think so, dearest; shall I ring for tea?”

“Yes, Catty, and put down your work for a few minutes, and come and sit by me, and hear what a treasure I think you. There is some pleasure in being the main-spring of such a piece of clockwork as this house is.”

Poor Mr. Wheedle Browne thought *he* was

the main-spring of that quiet, orderly, economical establishment.

The next day, Mrs. Wheedle Browne composed an advertisement for a man to act in the double capacity of footman and keeper ; and she got such a person,—at least, selected one out of three hundred applicants. She only told Wheedle Browne that Mr. Felix Featherstone required more attendance than the maids could give him without slighting their other duties ; that he was to be on board wages, paid in reality by Mr. Featherstone, who was to find two suits of the Wheedle Browne livery ; but the man was to consider himself their servant.

Wheedle Browne kissed his Catty for her good management ; and thus, whenever Felix had an attack, which, luckily, was not very often, he was quietly consigned to his own room, and to the care of the keeper.

This was the case on the afternoon of Emmeline's wedding day. And so great was the excitement caused by bridal festivities, and so maddening the recollections that rushed over his broken heart and morbid mind, that strong sedatives, the straight-waistcoat, and the sight of the lash, were, alas, necessary to induce him to lie down and remain quiet till the numbing in-

fluence of opium had stolen over his tortured feelings and distracted mind.

Emmeline was all anxiety to depart. Wheedle Browne was in a reverie; and the Misses Lindsay began to find it very dull. But "Catty," who, partly from her great liking for Claude, and partly from her jealousy and hatred of Emmeline, tried to defer, as long as possible, that moment she saw the Bride longed for—that of departure; kept up an incessant conversation with Claude. Made up of adroit flatteries and expressions of interest and friendship, he could not, without rudeness, break it off; and indeed, it was so nicely adapted to his particular character and its weaknesses, that he carried it on, till Bella, wearied and bored to death, and remembering several visits she had to pay, and purchases to make, as she was to depart for Southampton on the morrow, and for India soon after, exclaimed,—“Is it possible that was a quarter to twelve o'clock?”

All looked at their watches. Catty shot a serpent glance of anger at Bella Lindsay. For Emmeline rose, and said, “I will get my bonnet and shawl on directly; the carriage is at the door, and must have been waiting two hours, Claude.” Attended by her bridesmaids,

Bella and Lizzy Lindsay, she then hastened to Catty's bed-room.

"Come into the drawing-room for a minute, dearest!" said Catty to Claude. "I want to know what are your plans, and where you and dearest Emmeline are going?"

"Oh, not to any great distance, Catty. She is so anxious to be summoned by her parents to receive their pardon, that I am quite sure she will not go far."

"I had such a nice little plan, dearest," said Catty, taking Claude's hand, as they stood at the drawing-room window, and holding it. "But now I know more of dearest Emmeline, I am afraid to propose it to her. You know it is quite a modern fashion, Brides and Bridegrooms going selfishly off, alone, directly after the *déjeuner*. The Bride used always to take a Bridesmaid with her (her Sister, if she had one). Now Emmeline has no Sister, and I being married, of course could not act as a Bridesmaid. But I feel a Sister's love for you, Claude, and therefore for dear Emmeline; and I had made all my little arrangements to accompany you on your bridal tour, if Emmeline had been more"

"More what? She is an angel!"

"Well, then, not an angel, but a fond, timid

creature, who would have been glad of my countenance and company at such a crisis. But I see she has a will of her own ; and I fear my dear little scheme will not meet with her sanction : if it did, my little trunk is quite ready ; and I have arranged all about the children. I could stay a month comfortably. Do you think Emmeline would consent ?”

“I do not know what she might do, Catty,” said Claude, laughing, but not a little annoyed at the proposal, “but I am quite sure I should object, very decidedly. I wonder what Wheedle would have thought, of some lady riding bodkin between him and you, on your wedding tour ?”

“Oh ! but I’d gladly ride on the dickey ; I dote on a dickey ! Say yes—do, dearest ! I should be so happy, and so useful ! Poor Catty knows all Claude Lindsay’s ways ; and I could teach Emmeline how to make you happy.”

“Love will teach her that, I hope,” said Claude, coldly. “Don’t be vexed. Don’t cry, Catty. It is very kind of you ; but you do not see, blinded by your warm, kind heart, you do not see the absurdity—the impossibility of such an arrangement. I could not even hint at such a thing to Emmeline.”

"But you would like it yourself, dearest!"

"I cannot say I should. I am in love with my Bride, Catty. You forget that."

"But no love *can* stand the perpetual and wearisome *tête-à-tête* of a wedding-tour; no sensible woman would expose a man's affection to such a test."

"Why, you did, Catty?"

"Oh, yes! But Wheedle was asleep a great part of the time."

"Well, Catty, when I find it dull, I will send to you."

"Will you? Do you promise me that? Shall I be the first guest you ask to stay with you?"

"You shall—that is, if Emmeline agrees."

"If!—Ah! I see. You are going to be a poor henpecked Husband, Claude. On the first few days depend the balance of power for after-life. Let your will be law from the very first. Emmeline is not the lamb you think her. She has been a spoiled Child, and she will be a spoiled Wife—a perfect tyrant, if you don't assert yourself from the very first hour. Promise me I shall be your first guest.—You are afraid!"

"Not I, indeed. I know she will have no will but mine. There never was so docile—so heavenly a temper."

"Then say 'Yes.' Quick, here she comes!"

"Very well—'Yes.' Shall I ask her now?"

"No, no, no!—not till you find the *tête-à-tête* of the honeymoon a little tedious, and then you needn't ask her."

"Ah, that will never be!"

"We shall see."

At this moment Emmeline entered, ready for her journey.

"Have you decided where you would like to go, my love?" said Claude.

"I have been thinking of Southend; it is so quiet, so near London. No one there, one knows. And I remember once, when I was there for a few days with Papa, he liked it very much, and said Mamma and he spent their honeymoon there."

"Then Southend let it be. Shall we go to the Station? By-the-by, where is the Station?"

"In Fenchurch Street; but I prefer posting all the way. I hate a public conveyance, Claude, when I feel so agitated and anxious."

"We will post it then; and we have time to lose. Emmeline, my Wife, my Sisters—Catty is one of the one, her reception of us to-day

Catty and Emmeline embraced each other ; but in Catty's heart there was a tumult of envy, jealousy, and hatred—in Emmeline's a cold feeling of distrust and dislike.

Bella and Lizzy liked their new Sister, and took an affectionate leave of her, and shed some tears when they received Claude's last embrace. They were going to India, and they felt he had no thought but of love and Emmeline. They wept, but he kissed them in an absent manner, and they thought him very heartless. And Wheedle Browne was roused, by his little sharp Wife, out of a reverie in the dining-room, to come and hand the Bride into her travelling carriage.

It was a very gay and elegant new carriage, hired for the occasion. There were four beautiful horses, and two postilions in blue satin jackets, with large white favours. Claude had not calculated on posting more than a few miles, but it would not do, to begin by making Emmeline, to whom expense had never from her cradle been an object, feel so soon she had married a poor man.

Lankaster, as valet to Claude Lindsay, sate in the rumble, looking superbly handsome, but rather surly (for he had taken a little too much wine, and was always surly when he did so).

Ruth (now Mrs. Lancaster) was by his side, in high spirits, and looking very pretty. A crowd had collected in the street, attracted by the gay bridal equipage, and a buzz of admiration was heard as Emmeline appeared. Just as she stepped on the pavement, a bouquet of a very sombre cast fell at her feet, and a noise, half-shout, half-wail, proceeded from an upper window. Wheedle Browne, in absent mood, picked up the bouquet, and handed it to her. Emmeline turned pale as she took it, for she saw it was composed of rosemary, cypress, and rue. It had been thrown to her by poor Felix Featherstone, one of whose fancies it was to cultivate those funereal plants. Of course, coming from one "distraught," it had no real significance; but Emmeline was in that anxious, self-reproachful mood, which is so favourable to superstition, and she could not but look upon it as a bad omen.

Claude, who was listening to the farewells of Catty, mixed up, as they were, with flatteries, counsels, cautions, hints, inuendoes, professions, sobs, fears, and embraces, had not seen the dismal bouquet, and Emmeline thrust it into a bosom, heavy with the sense of filial ingratitude, and trembling with the dread of anticipated re-

tribution. Nor was her poor heart lightened, or her spirit cheered, when, turning out of Norfolk Street into the great thoroughfare of the Strand, the bridal carriage met a funeral procession, and the elegant travelling chariot was face to face with a stately hearse, whose nodding sable plumes cast a shadow over the white favours and the Bride's beautiful face. There was a moment's delay, for the Strand was crowded, and the funeral procession was a very long one.

In the first coach, as chief-mourner, Emmeline recognised the pale and tear-stained face of a young Guardsman, with whom she had often danced, the handsome Gerald Wildair. She had heard that he had offended his father by marrying beneath him ; and she had heard, too, that Colonel Wildair, a violent man, though a very fond, proud father, had been laid up with a fit of gout in the stomach, brought on by the shock of his son's *mésalliance*. By the pale and penitent anguish of the once gay, brilliant Gerald Wildair, and by that hearse and those mourning coaches, Emmeline guessed that the son's misconduct had killed the proud and passionate old man. A low cry of intense mental agony escaped her, as a possible parallel would force itself on her fancy.

Claude guessed the cause of the terrible emotion, she so vainly strove to conceal or control ; but it awakened more impatience than pity—more vexation than sympathy. Some of the seeds Catty had so slyly sown were beginning to bring forth bitter fruit.

“How can you be so weak, Emmeline ?” he said, in a tone of voice she had never heard from him before. She took her handkerchief from her eyes, and stole a glance at him. He was pale, and his eyes were full of angry fire.

Just at this moment, and while, the impediment removed, they sped along the Strand, which was literally crowded by people intent on business, vanity, or pleasure,—loud, clear, and distinct above the hum, the buzz, and the surge of the multitude—(almost, to Emmeline’s ear, as if an archangel spoke)—the bells of St. Clement’s burst out with that startling anthem with which, every day at noon, they endeavour to arouse the sons of earth to thoughts of heaven.—Emmeline had never heard them before. All this part of London was almost new to her. She was not aware of that bequest made by some true Christian, anxious to save souls, imperilled by the sin that sticketh fast between buying and selling, in order that, at the busiest

time of the day, the iron tongue of Time should remind men of the Saviour.

A hallowing influence stole over Emmeline's heart. Pride and resentment, which had been aroused by Claude's look and tone, faded away.

"I have sinned as a Daughter," she thought ;
"I will do my duty as a Wife. A meek and quiet spirit—that is what I need."

She held out her hand to Claude, who, still a little influenced by Catty's mischievous suggestions, took it more like a Husband than a Lover. But Emmeline did not withdraw it. She did not coldly turn away her beautiful head. She smiled faintly, and said :

"Forgive me, Claude. I will think no more of the past—the irreparable past—but will try to make the present and the future atone. Let us be happy !"

And Claude condescended to be pleased ; but Emmeline felt that he now accepted as a right those smiles he had so lately implored as a boon. She understood that they were now Husband and Wife ; and ere long she learnt something more—that they were "Baron et Feme."

CHAPTER XI.

THE HONEY-MOON.

EMMELINE breathed more freely when she found herself in the open country. It was enchanting weather ; and if "happy is the Bride the sun shines upon," Emmeline was very happy. For seldom in England (especially in Spring) has so radiant a sun brightened the landscape, or so warm a breeze waved the young green of the shrubs and trees. The sky was cloudless and of a bright cobalt blue seldom seen in our island.

There was nothing very striking in the country through which they passed with that delightful speed so different to the mechanical swiftness of the train ; but English roads, cottages, meadows,

and hedgerows are always pretty ; and the sun makes an old barn, or many-gabled white farmhouse on which he shines, brighter than a palace or a castle, where his rays are withheld. But if all was fragrant, bright, and cheering without, within everything tended to make Emmeline forget that she had no right to be happy.

As every mile diminished the baleful influence of Mrs. Wheedle Browne, and as Claude beheld Emmeline now dependent on him alone, looking upon him with almost imploring, though half-timid tenderness, he cast from his heart all distrust, displeasure, and marital feelings. The Lover triumphed over the Husband, and his eyes well expressed the gratitude, the love, and the rapture of his heart. He was always handsome ; but under the influence of the passionate joy he now felt, he was positively beautiful. He always spoke well ; but Emmeline, as she listened with rising tears and mantling blushes to his thanks, his praises, his picture of his present rapture, and of the fairy-land wedded love was to make their future life, thought she had never heard true poetry or true eloquence before.

There is nothing so soothing—so captivating to woman's ear as the voice of love ! There is nothing more intoxicating to her pride and

vanity than the idea of her omnipotence,—that her smile is a source of perfect bliss,—her tear, of unutterable sorrow,—her frown, of discomfort,—her coldness, of distress,—her displeasure, of despair. Emmeline saw that Claude's happiness depended entirely on her; that when her spirits rose, as the depressing influence of Norfolk Street and Mrs. Wheedle Browne yielded to the breath of Spring, the soothing effect of the country, and the Imperial presence of true Love, and her cheek recovered its bloom, and her manner its tender and graceful "abandon" and almost girlish gaiety, Claude's delight knew no bounds. Emmeline forgot all her sorrows—all her misdeeds, and all her penitence, in the new rapture of creating and witnessing true happiness.

The journey, tedious enough in itself, and which the Bride and Bridegroom of the rumble had found dreadfully so, seemed a brief and enchanted transit to Claude and Emmeline. The shades of evening were shrouding the somewhat barren scene when they reached Southend, and drove at once to the Royal Hotel.

Southend is always a quiet little place—rather the resort of childhood and old age than of youth and gaiety; and a new bridal carriage with four

posters! so beautiful and elegant a Bride, so handsome a Bridegroom, so superb a valet, and so smart a *femme de chambre*, had never before attracted the attention of the few premature stragglers located at Southend before the season had commenced.

The Royal Hotel is very comfortable and well appointed,—all English hotels of a certain class are. Of course, the very best of everything was produced for such company; though Claude and Emmeline assured the obsequious landlord and smiling landlady that they were perfectly satisfied, and were so unexacting, they ran the risk of being under-rated.

But the airs Lankaster was giving himself in what he called a “’ole—a mere muddy ’ole—a houtlandish place that he had never ’eard named in ‘Gruv’ner,’” convinced the people of the hotel that the master of such a great man and fine gentleman must be a person of vast importance!

Ruth, who, like many pert women who pique themselves on their spirit, was in reality a very coward—weak and imitative—taking her tone from her lord and master—agreed in all he said—seemed to think nothing good enough, and would have turned up her little nose at the

very landlady herself, but that Nature had saved her the trouble !

But while Mr. and Mrs. Lankaster were finding fault with their substantial evening meal, designated by Lankaster as "tea and table-cloth," Emmeline and Claude were enjoying an elegant little dinner, (the first repast at which she had ever presided as mistress). Her attempts at carving gave rise to a great deal of merriment. Claude, to the surprise and anger of the attendants, having ordered a dumb-waiter to be placed near him, and announced that he would ring when he wanted any one, seemed to expect Emmeline to carve. Of course, she acquitted herself very imperfectly ; yet no dinner, to Claude, had ever seemed so tempting. As for the wine, no wine ever tasted so delicious or proved so exhilarating. It was ecstasy to him when the protracted dessert was removed, to lie on the sofa, to which the tea-table was drawn, by a noble fire (very welcome as it always is in evenings in May), while Emmeline, *his* Emmeline, *his* bride, *his* wife, made the tea, and sate, in her graceful beauty, at the tea-table,—so near him that he could take her hand, and play with her long ringlets ; and she so pleased to see him so happy, and so much at home, that not only

her lips, but her very eyes, seemed to laugh for joy. Meanwhile, Lankaster, in a little parlour which he appeared to fill, so important and inflated had he become, was also stretched on a sofa, by a fire he had ordered. All grand as he was, he was often not above smoking a common pipe; but, in imitation of his betters, he now smoked a hookah! on the bowl of which "Cerito" pirouetted! The hookah was a present of Ruth's, who, although she feared her mistress would detect the smell of smoke (which she knew Emmeline abhorred), dreaded her Husband already so much, that she did not presume to make the slightest objection, but sate on the edge of the end of the sofa, rubbing his feet, which he declared were as cold as "hice," and ever and anon handing him a glass of hot rum-punch, which she had prepared, and which it was her duty to keep at a certain temperature, which she could only do by means of the kettle on the hob, to reach which she had to disturb the feet placed on her lap; and this very movement exasperated her superb tyrant!

In a little while, Lankaster put down his hookah, and went fast asleep, remarking that the "hair" always made him fit only for "Bedfordshire!" Ruth remained a prisoner, with nothing

to do, nothing to amuse her: his feet were still in her lap; and if she moved, she knew he would wake and grumble. She felt very angry; perhaps, as she looked into the fire, fast going out, but which she could not stir for fear of waking her Husband, she thought of Mr. Smooth and his eight thousand pounds, his prospective hotel at Brighton, and persevering love for her.

Lankaster was snoring loudly: a snore is not a romantic or endearing sound; it is always more or less connected, in the female mind, with the words — “selfishness,” — “brute,” — “pig,” &c., &c. . . . Ruth glanced angrily at him — his mouth was wide open. He did not look, in his plain clothes (without powder, tags, or silk stockings), and fast asleep on his wedding evening, at all like the brilliant, superb Lankaster, to whom Ruth had gladly sacrificed Mr. Smooth and his eight thousand pounds.

A question arose in Ruth’s mind, whether she had not made a very great fool of herself? A few tears began to twinkle in her small, but bright and pretty hazel eyes. There was a newspaper on the table, but she did not dare move to reach it. Just at that moment, she

heard a bell ring ; and a chambermaid, putting in her head, said—"Your lady's ringing for you—she've rung twice!" Ruth started up.

"Confound it ! what's all this row ?" growled Lankaster. "Do ye think I've no nerves ? Where are ye going, Ruth ? Sit still, I want to finish my nap."

"You must finish it without me," said Ruth, rather crossly ; "my mistress has rung twice ; I'll be back as soon as I can, dear !" she added, remarking a very fierce expression in Lankaster's fine eyes, and a very disagreeable compression of his splendid teeth, as he drew down the corners of his finely-chiselled coral lips. "I'll be as quick as I possibly can, my love !" and she shook the sofa pillows and placed them more comfortably under his handsome head, and, taking her shawl from a chair, wrapped his feet up in it. She then put his pipe and his rum-punch close to him, kissed his cheek, and followed the chambermaid.

"How long have you been married ?" asked the woman.

"We were married this morning !" said Ruth, blushing.

"And you're already a slave ; he snubs you

now! If you go on as you've begun, he'll strike you before the honeymoon's over."

"Oh! I'm not afraid of that; I've a good spirit of my own, when once it's roused."

"Rouse it then!" said the woman; "don't wait for him to rouse it with a kick—mine did. He was a handsome fellow, too, and I, like you, treated him as if he was gold, and I dirt. We're parted now."

"Where is he, then?" asked Ruth.

"Why, he's got his six months for a kick that sent me to the hospital for ten weeks; and I've sold all, and broke up the miserable home! Be advised,"—the bell rung again, and Ruth went upstairs to the Bride's dressing-room with a heavy heart.

"Yes, you've got a mistress to mind," growled Lankaster, mixing himself another glass of rum-punch; "but I'll let you know before long, that you've got a master to mind, too! This comes of throwing oneself away on a lady's-maid, when a real lady, that could buy up the whole hinsolvent, beggarly, bankrupt kith and kin of the Lindsays hout and hout, would be proud to be permitted to call me 'Lord and Master.' A precious fool I've made of myself! it's a reg'lar case of a fine young feller throwed away! and

what'll mother say? Her last words was, 'You're 'andsome; you're desper't 'andsome, you're downright killin' 'andsome. Your face is your fortune, and a very fine fortune too; don't go for to throw yourself away on dirt, for slips of gals aint no better; don't stoop, and pick up nothing' (I knew she'd got this 'ere Ruth in her heye)— 'make a good market of yourself, Tom! and remember, unless you can marry to your carriage, that a young man married is a young man married.' Poor old soul! what a blow it would be to her. She must never know it, or else that three hundred pounds she has saved up, will go past me to Jem. But luckily Smooth don't know I'm married; if he did, he'd let her know fast enough, for he've got friends down in Worcestershire, within a stone's throw of Mother's. They knows Mother, and knows all about her property, too. Mother's not to be moved, if once she takes a thing into her 'ead, and that baggage Ruth! wanting me to let Mother know! threatening she would herself, if I didn't! She'd better just, that's all! bride or no bride, I'd break every bone in her skin. Well, I'll go and sit in the bar for a bit of a change; this place is doosed slow; but the barmaid 'as got a pair of good heyes in her 'ead, and I see she knows

what's what. I'll go and 'play the pretties' to her."

Poor Ruth! this soliloquy proves that Mr. Smooth's prognostics, and her own misgivings, were not without foundation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE DAY AFTER WEDDING.

LUCKILY for Southend and for our bridal pair, when Emmeline entered the room where breakfast was laid, it was high water, and at high water poor little quiet Southend looks just as bright and marine as any of the more popular and frequented of our watering-places.

Southend at high water is as different to what it is at low water, as a heart high in hope is from one low and sunk in despair. Each little wave and ripple was bright in the sun and crisped by the breeze. A variety of boats, moored to posts and pillars of the pier, were dancing on the high water; the beautiful shrubbery, the great, distinctive, and peculiar charm of Southend, was all verdure and blossom. Every blossoming tree, and flowering and fragrant shrub, seemed col-

lected there, and, in spite of the inroads of those foes to their race, idle boys, the bright and busy birds filled the air with melody, and the safest leafy nooks with nests. It is a rare and beautiful union and contrast, that of the blue sea and the green shrubbery ; and as this shrubbery, although private property, is generously and hospitably thrown open to visitors, is well supplied with seats, and is rich in shade, shelter, and fragrance, and carpeted by soft grass and every fair variety of wild flower, it gives Southend a great advantage over those watering-places where, to enjoy the sea, you must brave the sun on some stony pier, scorching sand, or in some close, crowded reading room.

The fine weather, the high water, and the lovely trees and shrubs, exhilarated Emmeline. She caused the breakfast-table to be placed close to the open window ; and having made the tea and rung for the coffee, she was about to send for " Mr. Lindsay," when she saw him from the balcony, running towards the hotel with a beautiful bouquet in his hand. He knew Emmeline doated on flowers, and that every morning, by her father's orders, a nosegay was placed, from the conservatory, ready for her, by her plate. He feared she might miss this luxury ; and having

ascertained that exquisite hot-house flowers might be procured at two miles' distance, he had dressed with all speed, and while she fancied he was dawdling over his toilet, he, on the wings of Love, had sped two miles out and two back, to get her a few flowers ! . . . No wonder Emmeline, as soon as they were alone, hid her face in his bosom, and that when he made her raise it, he found the rose of her cheek "all washed in a shower" of tears.

Such small trifles seem, to woman's heart, proofs of such great love ; and such little attentions often outweigh in the female mind much more substantial tokens of affection !

Emmeline's spirits rose, at what she considered a proof of unspeakable tenderness and devotion. Claude, who was not very strong, and who had walked unusually fast, turned very pale. Perhaps the intense anxiety and excitement of the day before, were telling upon him. The pallor of his cheek and the soft languor of his eyes, his voice and his manner, had a wonderful effect on Emmeline's impressionable heart. She gazed at him with "swimming looks of speechless tenderness." She tended him, she waited upon him. It was a new delight to her to tend or wait on any one. She had hitherto always been the one

to be tended, to be waited upon. She herself wheeled a little sofa to the breakfast table; she made Claude lie down on it. She knelt on a footstool beside him, and held his cup to his lips, and he would only eat what she gave him. It was so delightful to him, to see such wifely and tender solicitude, in one whom he had hitherto only known as a proud young beauty, playfully coy, with now and then a little touch of dignified kindness. And lo! here she was, so long the unattainable, so long the inaccessible—the idol of society, the belle of the season—alone with him, his Bride, his Wife, the golden ringlets of her rare and beautiful hair looped up under a little head-dress of point lace, singularly becoming—her tall and perfect form arrayed in a morning wrapper of pale blue silk. Her gazelle-like black eyes fixed on him, their lashes wet with tears; her lovely white hands gently busy in waiting on him! Not only her unequalled person was his, but at this moment, her heart, her mind, her whole being, seemed, and were, devoted to him.

The sun shone brightly in upon them, and the breeze brought them sweet messages from the violet and the primrose; but they did not move, they were so happy—so intensely happy. In

silent ecstasy, they held each other's hands, and inwardly vowed to be all the world to each other ! ... Claude for a moment closed his eyes, and Emmeline gently kissed their lids.

The entrance of a waiter with the papers sent Emmeline to her own place, before the tea-pot ; and at Claude's request she took up the *Morning Post*, to tell him the news. The moment he had asked her to read, he repented of it, fearing she might light upon something unpleasant connected with her own elopement.

He tried to prevent her reading ; but she was already busy looking out for something likely to interest him. " Let us see," she said playfully, " if Blanche is married. Blanche Egerton was to be married yesterday to Lord Ebury ; they wanted me to be one of the Bridesmaids on the occasion. — Ah, here it is ! Such a grand affair it seems to have been. But, good heavens, Claude ! who can have put our marriage in ? Do you know who has done it ? Oh, I would not have had it done for worlds ! It could not be done by your sanction, Claude !"

" No, Dearest, certainly not ; let me see it."

Emmeline, ghastly pale, and tears gushing from her eyes, handed him the paper. He too changed colour as he read " MARRIAGE IN HIGH

LIFE. — On Thursday, 28th inst., at St. Clement's Church, Strand, by the Rev. Augustine St. Ange, Claude Lindsay, Esq., Barrister of the Inner Temple, to Emmeline, Daughter of Sir Hildebrand Montresor, Baronet. The happy pair, after partaking of a splendid *déjeuner* at the abode of Miles Wheedle Browne, Esq., (and his beautiful and accomplished lady), of Norfolk Street, left town to spend the honey-moon in the romantic seclusion of Southend."

"Very provoking; and in very bad taste," said Claude.

"But who can have done it? Oh! I can guess it could only be that odious, vulgar, artful woman, that canting, boasting, time-serving, Mrs. Wheedle Browne!"

"My dearest Emmeline! your anger makes you very unjust. Poor Catty may have done this—but if she has, I am certain it has not been with the slightest idea of annoying us."

"Oh no! She only thought of puffing herself off," said Emmeline, bitterly. "And having no delicacy of feeling, no one womanly sympathy or sentiment, she never cared for the agony it must cost me, to have our hurried, private, clandestine marriage, so vulgarly proclaimed and paraded. How much it will exasperate and

outrage my parents' feelings, that the first intimation of this solemn event, should reach them through that odious woman's coarse and vulgar puff; they will naturally suppose this is done by us."

"Well, what is done, is done; there's no help for it, Dearest, and therefore it's silly to torment yourself about it. Your parents must have heard it soon, and I don't see that it will make much difference in the end. We are quite aware that they will be very angry at first, and then, as they will be miserably dull without their Emmeline, and will miss you at every moment and at every turn; they will relent, and we shall present ourselves as penitents, and kneel a little while, and shed a few tears, and make some pretty speeches, and be forgiven and installed in Grosvenor Square, till Sir Hildebrand has found out some pretty house close at hand, which it will amuse him and her Ladyship vastly, to fit up for the young couple—that is the certain progress of the affair, my Love! And although I am almost as much provoked as you can be, at this premature, and I own pompous announcement—and think it very ill-judged of poor Catty, and altogether in wretched taste, still I don't see how it can affect us much in the end, and there is no earthly use in fretting about it."

"Ah, you do not know what effect it will have, Claude! In the first place, it makes me seem so heartless and ungrateful to be 'partaking of an elegant *déjeuner*,' when my Parents were in all the first cruel shock and bitter disappointment, caused by my ingratitude! Besides, such vulgarity and contemptible boast will be so very offensive to a man of Papa's taste and position. It will make him more than ever averse to the connexion. Of course he will think this Wheedle Browne and his 'lovely and accomplished lady,' must be very near relatives of yours, to have given an elegant and *récherche déjeuner* on the occasion of our marriage, in Norfolk Street, too! Then it publishes our whereabouts, and exposes me to all kinds of communications. Fancy an elegant *déjeuner* in Norfolk Street, Strand. Of course she knows no better; it is evident she has never moved in any good society—"

"Emmeline!"

"Except that of yourself and sisters; and I am sure both Lizzy and Bella are heartily ashamed of her, and will be so of this odious advertisement. Oh, it gives such a very erroneous impression. She is such a very vulgar, boasting, officious woman! It is dreadful to me to have her

and her unladylike doings mixed up in my father's mind with you, Claude! You!" she added in an altered tone, for she saw Claude looking both angry and hurt, "you! who are the very reverse of Mrs. Wheedle Browne in everything."

"Emmeline," said Claude, "I can understand how much it must annoy you to have our marriage published in the papers before you have apprised your parents of it, and obtained their pardon; but for this, I should feel extremely displeased, as well as deeply distressed, at your strictures on one who has so long been a Sister to me. Catty may have some faults;—she is a little vain, aspiring, and officious; but she has one of the kindest hearts, and most sincere dispositions, in the world. I would almost as soon hear you speak ill of one of my own dear, kind Sisters, as of Catty. Nay, I believe that poor Catty would do a great deal more to serve me than either Bella or Lizzy would (good as they are). I do think, Emmeline, that her perfect, tried, and disinterested affection for me ought to outweigh in your mind a few weaknesses and a little occasional vulgarity and want of tact."

"Indeed, Claude, I think so much affection, in so artful and forward a woman, is enough to make a Wife insist on a cessation of all intercourse;

especially when this 'tried, disinterested, and perfect affection' is so warmly appreciated and repaid."

"Why! Emmeline, most beautiful and most beloved of women! you can never be jealous of poor, dear, long-nosed, nut-brown Catty!"

"No! I hope I have too much confidence in you, Claude! and self-respect too, to be jealous, in the common acceptation of the word; but I do not like her—I have a great distrust of, and contempt for her. I think there is a great deal of impertinence in what she calls her 'plain-speaking and plain-dealing with her own sex;' and a great deal of levity in her general system of coaxing, cajoling, and pitying all *mankind*. It is extremely undignified in a married woman (the Mother of a family) to flatter, and fondle, and pity, and cajole every man she speaks to. I don't allude merely to you; but I have heard men, who have met her at public balls and third-rate parties, making such fun of the intensely affectionate interest she seemed to take in all their affairs. There was Captain Oswald Cumberland—a handsome, flirting, very forward man; he's an old friend of Papa's, but Mamma hates him; and Lord Wrexham says, he's very *mauvais ton*. However, I remember his making everybody at dinner one day at our

house, laugh so, with a picture, or rather a caricature, of a pic-nic, he went on; in which Mrs. Wheedle Browne, by some manœuvring, got included, and chance allotted her to him to take care of. She found out that, though he had been married some years, he had no children; and she bewailed it most bitterly, trying to make him feel quite angry and injured that there were none to transmit such a type of manly perfection. Then a button came off his glove—and she produced a ‘Lady’s Companion,’ and a whole assortment of buttons, and sewed it on; and seeing his handkerchief was not marked, she actually marked it, saying,—she thought everything belonging to ‘that dear, careless creature-man’ ought to be marked. Before the end of the long day they spent together he was ‘dear, and dearest, and dear Oswald.’ At least, so he said, but he is known to exaggerate terribly, and say anything that will make people laugh. He declared also, that at parting he narrowly escaped being embraced. She little thought what a quiz he was.”

“No! he’s an ill-natured, boasting fellow, as every one knows; and a mean snob to speak so of poor Catty. She is too amiable to these fellows, and too ready to kiss and to embrace

people ; but it's all her affectionate temper. She does it out of the overflowing of a warm heart."

"Oh, I could forgive her, if I thought that ; but I believe her to be very cold-hearted and unamiable. See, how her children dread her ! and that poor madman, whom she boasts of having got by an advertisement, how *he* watches her terrible black eyes !"

"Did she tell you she got him by an advertisement ?"

"Yes, and strongly advised *me* to advertise for just such a boarder !"

"Poor Catty ! I daresay she meant it well. But I should be very sorry to see you, my *beau ideal* of a finished gentlewoman, condescend to any of poor Catty's manœuvres. It is very proper for her, a busy, active, meddling, managing little woman, to advertise for a mad boarder, and become a sort of keeper to him ; and as Wheedle keeps her almost without money, and their income is so small, it was very clever of her to do it, and Featherstone is a great source of profit. But Heaven forbid that my Emmeline, —for grace, dignity, and beauty, a fairer and younger 'Eugenie'—should so degrade herself ; I would sooner sweep a crossing."

Claude did not know, perhaps, how much

interest it requires to get a crossing to sweep—nor what competition there is for the office !

Emmeline was restored to tranquillity by the deduction she drew from Claude's last speech. It convinced her of the full and entire justice he did, to her vast superiority over Mrs. Wheedle Browne. However, the discussion they had had, and the paragraph relative to their marriage, had quite destroyed the wrapt entrancement of their delicious *tête-à-tête*. Emmeline felt restless, excited, flushed ; and as the sun shone, the sea sparkled and danced to the breeze, and the bright green of the trees waved in the air, she proposed a walk, and repaired to her room to get ready.

When she was gone, Claude ran his eye over the whole paper, and the colour rushed to his temples as he read in a part, on which, luckily, Emmeline's eye had not lighted,—

“ELOPEMENT IN HIGH LIFE.—It is with great regret we announce that the family of one of our most ancient and respected Baronets has been thrown into the greatest perplexity and distress by the elopement of a young lady, a reputed heiress and an acknowledged beauty,—indeed, the reigning beauty of the *beau monde*. It seems that a clandestine engagement has

long existed between this 'cynosure of neighbouring eyes,' and a young Barrister, son of the gentleman who recently failed for more than a million, and died so suddenly at Boulogne-sur-Mer. It appears that the gentleman proposed to the young lady's Father, when at the summit of prosperity, and was refused; but Love will still be lord of all, and the Lover who was rejected by the Father, when reputed heir to a million, was accepted by the Daughter, in spite of his total ruin, directly she became of age. It is hinted that a Duke's and an Earl's coronet have been spurned by the fair runaway for the sake of Love's myrtle crown. This romantic affair is the topic of all the clubs and salons at the West End; and the most serious part of the story is, that the young lady's Father was so shocked at the intelligence of his Daughter's elopement that a fit of apoplexy was the result, and he is now lying at the family mansion, not a hundred miles from Grosvenor Square, in a very precarious state. The very night before her elopement, the young lady's twenty-first birthday was celebrated, at that same mansion, by the most brilliant ball that has been given this season, and at which the fair fugitive eclipsed all her rivals by her beauty, her grace,

and the tasteful magnificence of her Parisian toilette."

"Poor Emmeline!" sighed Claude, "thank Heaven, she has not seen this! It would destroy her peace to hear of her Father's illness. What violent and inimical feelings must have caused that fit! Pride, anger, mortification! and all because she has married me! I cannot be expected to feel for the old bashaw, except on poor Emmeline's account; of course, it must be a shock to a Father for a child to elope, but it was all his own fault. Had he given his consent when I was, to all appearances, a very fair match, even for Emmeline, this would never have happened; and, after all, the papers exaggerate so much. The old man may have turned pale, perhaps have fainted; but as to 'lying in a very precarious state,' that is regular *remplissage de Gazette*.—However, here she comes!"

Claude hastily concealed the paper under the cushion of the sofa, and, assuming a confidence and gaiety he did not exactly feel, he accompanied Emmeline in the first walk they had ever taken together, unless a few hurried turns up and down the paths of Grosvenor Square, could be called such.

Emmeline's kind heart always reproached her, when she had been betrayed into any expressions of bitterness or dislike; and she had that ready repentance, and eagerness to atone, which, though an amiable and endearing, is a very dangerous quality for a woman to possess, since most men are so ungenerous, that she can never afford to own herself in the wrong. Inexperienced and unaware of this, prone to confess, and even exaggerate her own faults, and restless till she had recanted what she hoped was an error, Emmeline, as they walked arm-in-arm to the end of that interminable pier, the glory of Southend, said,

"I am afraid, Dearest, that I spoke very bitterly of Mrs. Wheedle Browne. It is wrong, very wrong, and very ungrateful in me not to feel prepossessed in favour of one who has shown you kindness, one whom you honour by the title of Sister. I wish I could like her—and I cannot tell why I distrust and dislike her so much. To me, Dearest, she seems so much like a cat; so softly caressing, and yet so resolutely self-willed; so fond, and yet so cruel; so sleek and sly—so likely to play with a victim, and with such venomous claws hidden under the soft velvet of her sportive paws."

“Well, in early days we named her ‘Catty,’ because she had some qualities in common with a cat; but I agree with Walter Scott, I think cats a very slandered race. I consider a cat has nobler qualities than a dog; see the silent fortitude with which a cat will bear very severe pain. Tread on a dog’s foot, and he will go yelping all down the street; tread on a cat’s paw, and though she will wince, she will bear the suffering in silence, only retiring in injured dignity. Remark the courage and the instinctive generalship of a mere kitten at bay; she will, if necessary, face a bull-dog—her pluck is amazing; but she seizes her opportunity with the quickness and tact of the first Napoleon, and, if the barking bully turns his head, in a moment she is up a tree and out of his reach. She does not attach herself often, or to everybody, like a dog; but if she does conceive an affection for one person, it is all, that affection, to be worth anything, should be—exclusive and lasting. Then, she is a good and careful mother; and for minor virtues, such as neatness, cleanliness, quiet companionship, grace and dignity, commend me to a fine, large, first-rate tabby. I do not think it any insult to Mrs. Wheedle Browne to say she is like a cat;

she has all the best qualities of the best sort of cat."

"Well," said Emmeline, "I am very glad you do not, then, think me very spiteful for comparing her to a cat. I felt quite grieved at having done so."

"If a spiteful feeling prompted the comparison, my Emmeline," said Claude, taking—as men always do—high ground if woman takes low, and easily assuming the tone of the judge if she adopts that of the culprit—"If you spoke in bitterness, of one whom I have asked you, for my sake, to love as a Sister, do not check the penitence which ought to follow such an expression of such a feeling. You are very impressionable, and your warm impulses often lead you to form hasty and erroneous judgments. *I* am long in forming a judgment, but it is generally a very correct one at last. Let my judgment, then, Dearest, correct the errors of your imagination, and my head regulate the impulses of your warm woman-heart. And by way of penance, my darling, before I pronounce absolution, you must promise me to try all you can to like poor Catty, for my sake; to think kindly of her, if possible; and what I know *is* possible, indeed what you, my love,

must compel yourself to observe, never *say* a harsh or unkind word of her again."

Emmeline did not exactly like the sudden assumption of vast superiority—the dictatorship, the censorship, Claude so naturally assumed. As a girl, she had always kept up her own dignity; often playfully found fault with him, but never owned to any error in herself.

In consequence, he was her slave; he would have been so still, had she persevered in the same tone. Emmeline's new humility has converted the slave into a tyrant. Lowered in her own estimation by the sense of her cruel and undutiful conduct to her devoted Parents; enervated by sorrow and anxiety; feeling entirely dependant on him, to whom she has sacrificed everything, and, like a true woman, loving him the better for those sacrifices; grateful for the exquisite tenderness of his manner, and his lover-like attention about the flowers, isolated, clinging, and her own fancy lending him every noble and loveable attribute, Emmeline had fallen into that fatal error so common to Brides, of stepping down from the pedestal she had hitherto occupied with so much grace, to place upon it one who might never have betrayed that he was clay, had he not been enthroned as an idol; and

who would never have been able to abuse his power, had not she so foolishly invested him with it.

How many Wives may date a life of thralldom, or of vain struggle to regain that domestic sovereignty which is woman's right, to the fatal mistakes they have made by the false light of the honey-moon ; their fond folly in giving the reins into hands that cannot hold, and yet will never relinquish, them ; their silly self-abnegation, and more silly idolatry of those meant to be always cherished, comforted, tended, and loved,—but worshipped . . . never !

However, it was only by fits and starts that at the present epoque Claude attempted to govern. Emmeline was by nature his superior. It is a sad thing for a woman to *be* superior to her Husband : it is a terrible thing when she discovers it ; and a more terrible thing still when the fact forces itself on his mind too : but the most terrible state of the case is, when, one after the other, delusions vanish, and barriers are broken down, and he finds out that the superiority he has only just discovered, she has long been aware of. As yet, Emmeline, investing Claude with all the charms a girl's fancy bestows on her Lover, and all the excellencies a Bride's

imagination attributes to her Husband, Emmeline, in the humility of an affection fast growing into devotion, thought herself scarcely worthy of him. He as yet had not thought about it at all; but he had an involuntary instinctive sense of Emmeline's superiority, which betrayed itself in his manner, except when her own unwise self-disparagement, and more unwise exaltation of him, made him rebel against the instinctive deference he felt for her, and recall the fact that, in spite of her noble purity of thought and feeling—her lofty intellect—her generous heart—her thorough-bred and queenly bearing and beauty—he was now by Law, her Lord and Master, and that wherever he chose to go, she must follow. She had married him without any settlement; and therefore of money, which is power, she could never have a fraction, as a right—really and indefeasibly hers! The very clothes she wore, the ornaments that adorned her, any work of brain or hands that she might ever do,—all were his. If she were to earn thousands, she could not earn the right to one shilling as her own. She, the high-born, proud, gifted, graceful daughter of the old Norman House of Montresor, was a legal nonentity—her very existence absorbed in his: and he—Claude

Lindsay—of very moderate pretensions on the score of birth—of no particular elevation of mind or dignity of character—son of a bankrupt—penniless, but for his Bride's small, unalienable portion, he could ill-use her with impunity; and a few years ago (if not at the present time), he could have subjected this noble, delicate, and trusting woman, to the discipline of "whips and sticks." He could still, by a little management, starve, confine, and coerce her; and if she fled, he could drag her back, and compel any one who harboured her, to give her up to his vengeance.

It is quite true that these thoughts passed through Claude's mind, as they walked together, to the end of the pier; but with the conviction of his power as a *husband*, the *lover* shuddered at the bare idea of bringing one tear to those eyes; one flush of anger or shame to that brow; one sorrow or regret to that noble, gentle bosom. And at the thought, of the bare possibility of her ever repenting the union that gave him this power, the tears gushed to his eyes, his cheek grew pale, he trembled, he stood still; she looked up at him in surprise. They were alone; there was no one on the pier but themselves. He threw his arms round her; and when she said

"What is the matter, Dearest?" he replied.—
"Oh, Emmeline! I was thinking if you ever could wish that you were not my wife,—ever repent the confidence that has given me such power over your destiny? Say you never can—never will!"

"I never can—I never will, Dearest; only do not look so wildly! If you have power, it is to make me happy!"

"Oh, Heaven grant it may be so!"

"It must," said Emmeline; "no one would have any power over me but through my Claude's affections. Are they not entirely—devotedly yours?"

Poor Emmeline! Claude did not disabuse her. It was evident she had not studied Blackstone! Claude had. He knew his power. He would have felled any man who had told him at that moment, that he would ever use that power to distress, or injure, or coerce his Emmeline! but he knew his power, for all that. He had studied Blackstone, and to some purpose too!

Emmeline understood nothing relative to the passionate excitement and ardent devotion of his manner, but that he loved her with a wild and fitful passion, but with a steady and earnest tenderness too.

In the words he murmured ever and anon, as he pressed her to his heart,—“Mine! mine! all mine!” she did not detect the sense of ownership and mastery. She only heard the voice of Passion glorying in Possession. She was delighted, at his repeating with such triumph and ecstasy, that she was his. “Wise judges are we of each other.” Had she been in the secret of all the thoughts that came unbidden into his mind, perhaps she would not have blushed with pleasure at those murmured words, and have whispered, as they sate alone at the end of the pier, her head on his shoulder, and her hands in his,—“Yes, Beloved! yours, all yours, through time and through eternity!”

CHAPTER XIII.

MAN AND WIFE.

THE superb Lankaster and the lively Ruth, although they too were newly married, did not find the honey-moon pass very rapidly. It is only to the refined, the intellectual, and the sentimental, that Love can (even for a few weeks) supply the place of all other excitement and all the customary pleasures and businesses of life.

In the love of the uneducated and the coarse (and the uneducated must be the coarse), there are no phases in love. Their courtships, it is true, are very protracted; they often last till each has amassed enough to enable them jointly to set up a shop, or open a house in the "Public line," generally the great object of their ambition, and

of their economy ; but then they have the business of life to attend to in the meantime. They can only give a thought now and then to objects and feelings, that engross the whole being of the luxurious and the idle.

Lovers in the higher classes live only for each other. A young lady in love,—truly and desperately in love, and engaged, lives in reality but for one : every moment not devoted to that one, she considers wasted. The notes and letters she writes to her Lover would outnumber Madame de Sevigné's to her Daughter. Her needle, her pencil, her voice, her harp, her piano, her " many twinkling feet," are only employed with reference to him. Her life is full of him. No party interests her unless he goes with her, or unless she is to meet him there. No dress pleases her unless he admires it. Whatever she does, must be done either with him or for him. Her life is full of him. She is in love ! and with him, if equally in love, it is the same.

But among the lower orders, work must be done and duties performed, all the more zealously, if " Mary " and " Jeames " have agreed to take each other " for better for worse," as soon as they can be sure of being " comfortable !" A Sunday walk now and then, a few treats to the Play or

Cremorne, a word or two on the stairs (if living in the same great house), or a whisper, at dusk, through the area railings, if not ; this is all that Love can expect of them. And when the lovers have become man and wife, sentiment will, in the higher classes, often last, when Passion is sated. They have thought and felt so much about each other as lovers ; they have much to tell each other, when wedded, and lovers still ; for a time, at least, they never tire of talking of themselves : their mutual accomplishments form a mutual bond of union and a delightful resource. He reads so exquisitely, and she listens so charmingly, and applauds so inspiringly !

“ Then round him hangs such a perpetual spell,
Whate’er he does, none ever did so well.”

Of course, in time he will sigh for more exciting scenes, and the companionship and pursuits of men ; but, perhaps, not till she has new sources of intense and delightful interest.

The honey-moon of the educated and refined may be, and often is, a period of tranquil and perfect bliss. But the coarse, the ignorant, and the vulgar, what can they do but quarrel, if thrown entirely upon each other’s society ? This was now pretty much the case with Mr. and Mrs. Lankaster. They gave themselves such

airs, and so openly proclaimed Southend "A 'ole, a 'orrid 'ole," that, except the pretty barmaid, who flirted a little with Lankaster, as he said, "on the sly," no one would approach them. They had very little to do; for as there was no other company at the hotel, all the waiters and chambermaids devoted their whole time and attentions to the Bride and Bridegroom. Lankaster had never been a valet before; and Claude found him rather clumsy, and therefore troubled him very little. Ruth waited on her lady, of course; but what was very hard work in London, where the belle of the season changed her dress sometimes five times a day, and her mind double that number of times, was almost a sinecure, where, after her simple morning toilet, she hastily changed her dress at seven o'clock for dinner, and, weary with rambling all day long with Claude, in the country, or by the sea, was glad to retire for the night, before the hour at which it was her wont to dress for a London ball.

No! Ruth and Lankaster had nothing to do. There *was* a little more refinement and sentiment in Ruth than in her husband. There always is more of the lady in the young woman of the lower orders, than of a gentleman in the man! She, while sitting up till morning in

Grosvenor Square, awaiting her mistress's return from ball or soirée, had occasionally beguiled the weary hours with the last new novel or poem. She would have liked to talk of love, and walk by the sea, or through the fields, with her bridegroom.

Emmeline often rode on a pony, while Claude walked by her side: and thus they made excursions to all the ruins, and to everything worth seeing in the neighbourhood. Ruth proposed to Lankaster that *she* should have a donkey, and explore the country in an opposite direction,—he walking by *her* side. But there was no romance—no sentiment in Lankaster. He was bored to death at Southend. He bitterly repented having sacrificed his liberty and his superb self for a “slip of a gal,” for whom he soon discovered he did not care a pin, and who seemed to have very little notion of the rights of a Husband and the duties of a Wife. “However,” he said to himself, with a malignant grin, that disclosed a whole set of teeth as white and even as a string of Roman pearls, “it’s my place to teach her what she owes to me! I’m her Lord and Master; and if it hadn’t been for her, and my cussed folly, I might have been Lord and Master of a Lord’s daughter and a princely for-

tune! Why, I was a thousand times better off with Montresor! Gruv'ner Square, in the 'ighth of the season, aint to be sneezed at by a fine young feller six feet three, and whom no woman, 'igh or low, could look at with hindifference, whatever pride might make her pretend! I feel as if I was in a tomb here—nothing to be seen or done—no one to speak to or to look at one. And with such prospects as I had! I find that 'ere Ruth to be a millstone round my neck! and cross and snappish she is too—snapping one up so short; and instead of trying to amuse me, and reconcile me to my lot, sulking in corners, and then coming down with red eyes! It don't sound well to 'it a woman in the honey-moon; but just let's get this stoopid month over, and then let her show her hairs!

“I've heard father say,—‘A man may beat his wife with a stick as big round as his thumb, and as long as the pot'll boil off the fire!’—yes, and seen him do it too—and Mother all the better for it. Father said that was the law!

“Now,” he added, looking complacently at a very large, well-formed thumb, with an oval and carefully-pruned nail, and placing the kettle, just as the water boiled, on the hob, “now, let's see a stick of that size well plied during (and he

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know what the law allows—learnt that from Father, if I learnt nothing else.”

But, to the surprise of Lankaster, Ruth came in to make his tea, all smiles and graces—her bright black hair in rippled bands, a charming little mixture of lace and pink ribbon on her head—a pretty lilac muslin dress fitted to her neat little figure, and a little fancy apron, with pockets, making her look like a waiting maid in a Play. Ruth was very pretty, especially when she smiled; and she smiled on Lankaster as if they had parted the best friends in the world.

The secret of this was, that there lived in Southend a dressmaker, with whom Ruth had formed an intimacy. She was neither young nor pretty; and Lankaster had behaved so insolently to her when she had called to see Ruth, and when they had met in a Sunday walk, that she took a great dislike to him; and seeing his young wife often in tears, she had expressed so much pity, that Ruth was soon won upon to tell her her story.

Mrs. Horn had been married twice, “which they both was brutes,” she said, in Gamp-like style; “indeed, I’ve never seen the Husband that wasn’t, only some’s cunning brutes, and

some's foolish brutes ; — but, high and low, they're all much of a muchness ! Your beautiful young lady will find it out in time : but her's is one of the cunning ones—he'll not show himself to speak of, just yet. Your's is a foolish brute, just like my first.—As handsome a man as ever stepped Joe Horn was—a personable fresh-coloured man, six feet in his shoes—a master butcher. I was a silly young think, and fell in love with his black eyes and bushy, black whiskers—his great rosy cheeks, and his thick red lips, and large white teeth. I got to hate 'em all soon ; and I've never been able to bide a tall, showy feller since. It turned me again yourn directly I see him.

“ Well, I had a matter of two hundred pounds left me by Grandmother—coming to me the day I was two and twenty. That's what he was after. Mother see through him—I didn't. I married him. He got the money—I never saw a shilling of it. We'd been married about a month, when I wanted to lend five pounds to mother, who was short, for her rent ; and I asked him, quite civil, where my money was, as I wanted a matter of five pound ?

“ ‘ What for ? ’ says Horn, gruffly.

“ ‘ Well, Horn,’ says I, ‘ that aint a fair

question ;' and adds, in fun, 'what's yours is mine, and what's mine is my own.'

" 'You'd better tell me what you want five pounds for,' said Horn, looking as black as thunder. He was sharpening his knife to kill ; and I was took all of a shudder !

" 'You'd better answer my question, Missis,' he said, going up to me.

" 'I thought so too ; so I said,—' Well then, Dear, it's only to lend Mother, who's short of her rent.'

" 'More shame for her,' cried Horn ; 'does she think to come spunging on me ?'

" 'On you ! no,' says I ; 'but it's my money,' says I.

" 'Your money !' says he.—'You've nothing ! You haven't a penny or a rag of your own !' says he.

" 'I think the law will decide that I have,' says I ; and turned to leave the shop.

" 'There's but one law for you to appeal to,' says he, 'and that's my law !'

" 'Lor' ! how he roared it out. A heavy blow fell on the back of my head, struck by a hand accustomed to fell an ox. It is a wonder it was not fatal. I was quite senseless ! and when I recovered some degree of consciousness, I was

alive to the fact of his removing me from the shop into the back parlour by a series of kicks !

“ I never saw one penny of my two hundred pounds : the law made it his. I was his. What I suffered with him during two years, no one can imagine ! He very nearly knocked out one of my eyes, and did break two of my teeth ! and once, when my mother called to see me, he lifted her up in his arms, and put her into the street ! She was a small, feeble woman ; but she, I am happy to say, left the marks of her ten nails on his face ! He was very vain ; and for weeks he was ashamed to show himself after. I was dying by inches—but there seemed no hope of release ; he looked likely to live to be a hundred—when one day, a cow, whose calf he had just taken from her, and was driving savagely away to his slaughter-house, broke loose, not having been properly secured. The cow soon pursued, and, maddened with rage, and that maternal tenderness dumb creatures often seem to feel more than Christians, dashed after him. Bully as he was with women, he was an arrant coward at heart. He took to his heels ; but she outran him : he felt her sharp horns planted in his broad back. She tried to toss him, but his

bulk forbade. Some of his men seeing her goring him, came to his rescue; but his spine was injured. He lingered three months in great agony, perfectly helpless, and subject to paralysis; and then he died.

“The undertaker who conducted his funeral, and who, except the parish doctor, was the only man I saw—for Horn’s violent temper had completely drove everybody away—was, or pretended to be, much taken with me, in spite of this scar over my eye, and my broken front teeth. He seemed to pity me very much, and often dropped in to tea, which my mourning was new and becoming! He was the very opposite of Horn; he was very small, spare, pale, gentle, and tender like.

“I carried on the business, with the help of a foreman; and I was comfortable, and my own mistress. My dear Mother (the best Mother that ever stepped) came to live with me. Lor! how happy we were! and I should have been a happy woman still, and well to do, but that this fellow, whose name was Hope, but who looked the picture of Despair, prevailed on me to marry him. What possessed me I can’t think! Poor Mother saw through him too, and begged and prayed me to refuse him! but I suppose it was to be!—at any rate, I became Mrs. Hope!

Much against my will, he very soon sold off the goodwill of the butcher's shop and the business. By degrees I found out that, in a very private way, he gambled and drank! He was a cunning brute: and I lived to regret even Horn, for he insured my poor Mother's life and mine. She died suddenly, soon after; and her last words to me was—which I shall never forget, if I live to be a hundred!—

“ ‘Polly,’ says she, ‘don’t take on, and don’t take no notice: but be on your guard! I haven’t come fairly by my end. But don’t make a disturbance,—anything for a quiet life! only be on the watch! Your life’s insured too. Polly! he says I’ve got the cholera!—’taint cholera; its pison! You’ll be made out to have it next! I heard him say to nurse—‘Cholera’s so catching, most likely the missis will have it too!’ Never mind about me, but take care of your blessed self, Daughter!’ And with those words, she died in agony.

“That very night, being very bad, I was about to drink a glass of wine he offered me, in seeming kindness, when from a bitter taste it had, my Mother’s words came back to me, and put into my head that all was not right. I begged him to drink it himself, and give me another: this

he would not do. Seeing the parish doctor coming to the house at the moment, I called him into my room, and told him I was convinced Hope had poisoned my Mother, and meant to poison me ! The doctor took the wine to analyse it ;—poison was found in it ! My poor Mother's remains were dug up ! I dare say you remember the case.—He was tried and hanged !

“ He had run through everything ! So I took in needle-work, and am very comfortable : but my experience makes me to offer you my advice. Your bargain is not unlike Horn. Sometimes I think I might have managed Horn. I cried and fretted, and gave way. That's just what you're doing. Don't do it !—Never cry—never fret—never sulk ! Always smile and look pleased. Whatever the fellow tells you to do, say yes—but *do* just as you please. Thwart him in deed, but not in word ; and begin, from the very first, to make a purse for yourself. Dress smartly—look pretty—and behave pleasantly. If he strikes you, pluck up a spirit ; and though you're a mite to him, throw something at his head, and, if possible, spoil his beauty for a time ;—nails is good tools for that work ! It's a great risk. He *may* kill

you then ; but if you don't do it, he *will* in the end ; but if you manage well, it wont come to that. Directly a Woman cries, a Man hates her, because she looks ugly, and despises her, because she proves weak. Always seem cheerful—merry—obliging ; but always pay him out when you can !”

CHAPTER XIV.

CUNNING VERSUS CRUELTY.

RUTH, when she went to her room sobbing with grief and anger at Lankaster's savage and spiteful behaviour, found Mrs. Hope there with a dress she had altered for her. It was a comfort to Ruth to unburthen her heart; and it was on this occasion that she learnt so much of Mrs. Hope's history, and obtained so much good practical advice.

Lankaster, seeing her so smart, so pretty, and so cheerful, when he had expected her to be in a neglected dress, disfigured by tears, and dejected — if not sulky — felt a respect for her, which he had been a stranger to, ever since their marriage.

"I am afraid you thought me cross about the donkey-chaise, Ruth," he said.

"Oh no! one cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, Lancaster," she replied, laughing. "Of course I must not expect you to be polite and attentive to me like Master is to Missis. I once read in a book, called 'Woman,' that the higher you go, the better women are treated; and the lower you go, the worse—so that, at last, among the savages they do all the work, while the men lounge at home using them like Turks. No woman must expect to be treated like a Christian, unless she marries a man of education."

"Like Smooth!" sneered Lancaster; but he got up to put the water in the tea-pot for the first time since he had been a Benedict.

"Well, Mr. Smooth has seen a great deal of the world, dear!" said Ruth, with her softest smile; "and he reads a good deal. I don't think if Mr. Smooth were married, he'd be a brute to his wife."

"And do you mean that I am?"

"Oh, you Lancaster, how could I mean that any one so kind, so attentive, so indulgent, and so polite as you are, could be a brute!"

Lancaster looked very much puzzled—but

Ruth smiled so cheerfully, and was cutting his ham so carefully, and so daintily taking off the tops of his new-laid eggs, that he could not believe she could be angry with him.

"When do you expect any money from Miss Emmeline—I mean from Mrs. Lindsay, Ruth?" said Lancaster. "I am getting doosed hard up."

Previous to her intimacy with Mrs. Hope, Ruth would have told her husband that she was to receive a quarter's wages that very evening; but remembering the advice of one who had had two bad husbands—"above all, begin betimes to make a purse for yourself"—she replied evasively, "Oh, I've only a trifle due to me, and Missis is very, very short of money. But you, dear! you took your quarter's salary just before we married; what have you done with the cash?—you've had no expenses to speak of."

Lankaster was astounded at his wife's cool impudence, as he inwardly called it. He felt a very great inclination to knock her down, and he involuntarily doubled his fist: but there was a glitter in the eye, which Ruth kept steadily fixed upon him, that he did not exactly like—nor did he like to tell what he had done with his money. Lancaster belonged to a club—a

sort of "High life below stairs" establishment—where, of course, he went by the name of "Montresor," and where he often played *écarté* with a footman called "Wrexham" (after his master), and as constantly lost. He always went to the "Club" with a plan in his head, which he called a "dodge for doing Wrexham," but he always came away "done." Then, too, there was a very pretty Irish girl who had lost her place and her character through him, and was in great misery and distress—that would not have moved him, but she had a Mother, an Irish basket-woman, in Covent Garden (a match for most men), who swore "she'd have the law of him, and spoil his beauty too for him," unless he did something for "Judy and the babe," till she got about and into place again—that *did* move him. Added to these expenses, he squandered in cosmetics as much as an old Court beauty. No unguent less costly than "thine incomparable oil, Macassar," ever approached his hair—nor anything harsher than milk-of-roses his face. He used none but the choicest French soaps and scents; and no dentifrice but Odonto. He had been suspected of being addicted to "Pears's liquid bloom of roses"—and no exquisite among the *élite* indulged

himself in the use of so much eau-de-cologne ; but that it must be owned he found himself in— only he had hitherto found it in the drawing-room, or in Lady Montresor's boudoir.

To Ruth's question, he replied, " that until he had made up his accounts, he could not tell how his money had gone ; but that he had given away a ' goodish sum ' in charity."

That was *his* manner of viewing the expenses of poor Judy and her wretched infant.

Seeing Ruth's lip curl, and fearing any further investigation, he said, " It's so beautiful now, Ruth, that if you still wish for a drive in a donkey-shay, I'll go and 'ire one."

Ruth replied, " that if her dress was finished she should like to go, and that she would run upstairs to see."

Ruth's real object in running upstairs was to ask Mrs. Hope's advice. She was so well pleased with the result of the dressmaker's counsels hitherto, that she resolved to be guided by them entirely. She found Mrs. Hope, who *had* finished the dress, putting on her bonnet to go home. " Go ! by all means go ; and be as good-tempered and pleasant as you can : always accustom him to provide you pleasures, and always let him see you expect to share his.

That's your duty to yourself—and your duty to him is, whenever you're out on a holiday or a 'spree' with him, to add as much as you can to the life and merriment of the party. It's a great and a very common mistake in wives in all classes, to make martyrs of themselves. They stay at home sulking—or if they go, they go and are so cross, they spoil sport. But now run down and tell him you're ready. It's likely if I'd gone out with Horn, as a matter of course as a wife should, when he went to fairs and markets (which such as he always makes a sort of junket), things wouldn't have turned out so bad. I might have done something with Horn—he was a brute at times, but he wasn't a consistent, cunning brute; and if he hadn't been cut off in his prime (and what a fine man he was!), I'd never have fallen in with that mean, murdering sneak of a Hope—and my dear Mother (worth all the Husbands that ever cursed and swore) would be alive now. There, good bye! though I say it as shouldn't, your jacket fits like wax—and for a little figgur, I never saw a neater. I was always called a fine woman—you aint that—but very often them great fellers minds little women most; they are more ashamed to knock 'em about—but you

follow my advice, and he wont never offer to hit you. He wont try that on, if you don't let your temper get the better of your prudence. Always say, 'As you please, my dear,' and then always *do* as you please yourself. Always ask him about *his* money, but never tell him about your own; and never let him cost you a tear or a sixpence, for take my word he arnt worth it—none of 'em is.

“Now, just see, instead of scolding and swearing at you, he's been and hired a shay; and there he is putting in a footstool, and spreading a cloak for you to sit on. Ah! woman cries out—and well she may, if she's in a man's hands—but it's she herself gives herself up into his hands, no one else can—and if she does, no one can help her. Now, don't go for to praise, and kiss and hug, and worship, and idolise the feller, he's only doing his duty; and if he did ten times more, it would only be his duty. Just see, in all classes, what a girl gives up to become a wife—as long as she's a maid, she's a sort of Queen; she has a Court of her own.

“A pretty young girl is the happiest thing in the world—she may have to work, but she's strong and willing, and its a pleasure to work, when what you work for is your own. If she's

industrious, and respects herself, everybody respects her. Her parents love and bless her, as my poor Mother did me. She's health—high spirits, everybody's good will and good word. She eats hearty, sleeps sound, and is as merry as a grig—clean, neat, smart as can be. Well, some fellow talks her over—look at that same girl when she's been married a few years. Health broken, spirits crushed—beauty faded—working harder than ever, but never having a shilling to call her own. A child at her breast, two others at her feet; and maybe another coming! Pale, lean, her hair ragged, her dress ruffled—everybody running her down (for she owes to every friend who will lend, and at every shop where they will trust her). From the smart housemaid or perhaps lady's maid, she is come down to the wash-tub—and what she earns is not hers.

“ Her *husband* forces every shilling from her to spend at the ale-house and on other women—and she has no redress. She is his—her earnings are his; and to prove she is his, he ‘marks his own property in black and blue.’ Well, it's very dreadful, and the man deserves hanging; but it was her own folly in the first instance.”

"For accepting him, you mean," said Ruth, with prophetic terror.

"Well, they say there's a fate in that ; but her fault is in giving way at first—let her never lose sight of a few simple rules. 'Never shed a tear, never give him a sixpence—be always kind and civil, but never fond. Do your duty by him, but nothing more. If he drinks, don't starve yourself, but provide no dinner for him—tell him gently he has spent on drinking what you had reckoned on for victuals. If he strikes you, have him up at once, and don't live with him again. Go back to service and break up the home.'"

"But if there are children ? . . ."

"There will be none, if you part directly he is brute enough to leave his marks on you ; for be sure, unless he does it during the first year, you, if you are not a born fool, will prevent his ever dreaming of such a thing. Moral power is greater than brute force ; but if a man has once marked a woman, and she has passed it over, he'll murder her some day. I've studied the police reports, and I have found that always comes true ; and now good bye, and a pleasant ride. Your feller's very like Horn—and if I'd gone by the rules I'm giving you,

Horn might be alive now, and we'd be a happy couple as couples go, and dear Mother would be living to see it."

Ruth thus primed, did not go into ecstasies at Lancaster's attention to her comfort. She smiled and said, "Ah, that will do very well."

This sort of conduct she kept up throughout the drive.

Lankaster did not know what to make of her, but he was awed in spite of himself by her quiet dignity and self-possession—and then she talked so pleasantly and looked so pretty ! Till now, she had generally appeared, her eyes red and swollen with weeping, her cheeks pale, her manner cross, resentful, her conversation made up of bewailings and reproaches. Had not Emmeline been so entirely engrossed by her love and her happiness in Claude's devotion, she must have noticed the alteration in Ruth ; but Love is very blind and very selfish, and Ruth's Master and Mistress were the only people who had not remarked how often Ruth's eyes were red, and her cheeks blistered with tears.

It would have been well for the weak, imitative, impressionable Ruth, if she had always had Mrs. Hope at hand, to advise and to back her

up. While under her influence, Lankaster was fast becoming a very attentive, tolerable husband ; and we must agree with Mrs. Hope, that at the beginning of their wedded sorrows, the destinies of women are to a very great extent in their own hands. Cowper says, and says most truly, that of all the vices of man's heart—

“None sooner springs into luxuriant growth
Than cruelty, most devilish of them all.”

The records of Wedlock among the lower orders prove this true. Hard words, tamely submitted to, are very quickly followed by hard blows, which, if not properly and condignly punished, lead to brutal ill-usage as a regular system, and to the constant recurrence of Wife Murder.

As they drove along, Lankaster, for the first time since their marriage, seemed to think it worth his while to consult Ruth as to the present state of affairs and their future prospects. Hitherto she had only heard the selfish and tyrannical expression, “I intend, or choose to do so and so.” Now he prefaced each sentence with, “What do you think, Ruth?” or “What say you, my dear?”

Ruth answered kindly, but not with the

affection and *abandon* she would have shown a day or two before.

“Don’t you think, Ruth,” he said, “that it’s a thousand pities that I—that is, you and I,—should bury ourselves here? It’s my opinion we’re all in the wrong box, and that this affair won’t blow over and be forgiven so easily as we all imagined. Now, if Sir Hildebrand and Lady Montresor cut their daughter off with a shilling, this is no place for us. I’m very sorry for her, but we can’t afford to stay, and they can’t afford to keep us. She’s never had an answer to any of her letters, has she?”

“No!” sighed Ruth; “the more’s the pity.”

“How many has she written?”

“Several; twice to her Father, twice to her Mother, once to Miss Smyley; and yesterday she wrote to Miss Meeke, her Aunt; but Master don’t know she’ve wrote more than once—he didn’t like her doing it then. She thinks I don’t know it, but she read over what she’d written, while I was brushing her hair; so, of course, I can’t pretend to be quite in the dark.”

“Oh!” said Lankaster, “that’s one way the maid has of knowing all her Mistress’s secrets. Many a love letter to a lady I’ve heard repeated,

word for word, by the maid, who'd read it over her mistress's shoulder. And what does she say—that he makes her a good Husband?"

"Oh, she says he's an Angel to her, and that nothing is wanting to her happiness but to be forgiven by her Parents. They must have hearts of stone—for she begged and prayed so!"

"It's my opinion they've cast her off. And so, now, she has written to Miss Meeke?"

"Yes, to beg her to let her know how her Parents are, and whether there is any hope of her being forgiven?"

"Meeke 'll answer it. She'll be in a fine way. Miss Emmeline used to allow her fifty pounds a-year. I shouldn't wonder the old scare-crow 'll be coming down here, bothering us, now she knows where we are.

"Don't you think, Ruth, when I've been a month, I'd better ask for some money, and come to an understanding? I know the people here are going to send in their bill—a precious long one, too, I can tell you. I don't like Lindsay much; but Miss Emmeline 's a fine 'oman. I'm sorry for her; but unless it's made up, and the old people come down 'ansome, it's nonsense our staying here—it's ruin to us and to them

too. If they're going to mope down here much longer, you can't wish to stay?"

"I should be very sorry to leave my dear, kind young Mistress—and in trouble too!"

"But, Ruth, you wouldn't let me go alone, surely? besides, this here Lindsay can't afford such fust-rate servants. It's my opinion they'll have to come down to a second-floor, and a maid of all-work. You wouldn't like to be that maid of all-work, Ruth?"

"Oh, dear! I never was brought up to nothink menial," said Ruth. "What a pity it was Miss Emmeline left such a home! And the very night of the ball a Duke fell in love with her! besides the old Hearl that was waiting to pop the question! Oh! if gals did but know when they're well off!"

"Is Missus pleasant with you, Ruth?"

"Not like she used to be: she never tells me anything now—she always seems so took up; and she's dressed in no time to what she used to be;—half an hour in the morning, and a few minutes before dinner, and half an hour to brush her hair and undress her—that's about all the service she wants of me. Then, she've no secrets now—at least, none to tell me;—no notes to post 'on the sly,'—nothink to tell me,

except—‘Oh, Ruth, how perfectly happy I should be now if I got a kind letter from home!’—I hardly know how to get through the day. I’ve no bonnets or caps to make or to trim; and she hasn’t bought a new dress, mantle, or shawl, since her marriage.”

“It’s my opinion, Ruth, she’s got little or no money to spend.”

“Likely enough! I’m sure that white bonnet ought to have come to me long ago; I never knew her to go for to think of wearing a white bonnet a fortnight before; and here we’re in the fourth week!—besides, she’ve actually given me some gloves to mend and clean! You could have knocked me down with a feather when she gave them to me;—she turned as red as my shawl—I never had such a liberty taken with me! At home, directly a glove had a soil or a crack, it came to me—I always took it as my right.”

“As for that ’ere Lindsay,” said Lankaster, “he and I have been two or three times on the heve of a reg’lar blow up! His things wouldn’t fit me, therefore I don’t covet ’em—he may wear them threadbare for what I care; but a duller, silenter, stoopider feller I never came across. What I propose is, Ruth, to make out

the month, if we can exist so long in this 'ole this 'orrid, muddy 'ole; and then, if Montresor holds out, and they mean to stay here, I'd better write, or you write in my name, for you're the best hand at writing, to Miss Addington, and tell her that we've left Sir Hildebrand to attend Mrs. Lindsay, who, now, can't afford fust-rate servants, and that if she still wishes to engage us, we'd be glad and proud to enter her service. Mrs. Lindsay 'll give us good characters if we keep a civil tongue in our 'eads up to the last. I see no chance now, of her Gov'ner coming round; and if he doesn't, hang me if I think they'll be able to keep any servants at all. You may be attached to your Mistress, but you're no fool, Ruth. You won't like me to go and live at old Addington's without you—let alone the old gal who worships the very ground I tread on. The cook's a doosed fine 'ooman, and the under housemaid 's over 'ead and ears in love with me—and a neat little thing, too. 'Taint fair to expose a fine young fellow to temptation. If you're there, I shan't have hies for any one else!"

Lankaster had a shrewd idea that Miss Addington would wish Ruth to come too. Ruth had all her sex's jealousies, and a sort of love

for her Husband ; she did not feel at all inclined to trust him alone, in the midst of temptations, nor to sacrifice herself and her prospects, as well as her handsome Husband, to a Mistress who seemed to have at once withdrawn her confidence and her perquisites ; who neither bought new things, nor cast off old ones ; and who would probably come down to a lodging, and a maid of all-work.

Ruth agreed that if Sir Hildebrand and Lady Montresor did not relent at the end of the honeymoon, she would come to an understanding with her Mistress. And as she knew Emmeline had a high spirit, she had no doubt the result would be the dismissal of herself and Lankaster ; in which case, they would offer themselves to the Honourable Miss Addington—Ruth as lady's-maid and Lankaster as groom of the chambers.

Meanwhile, Emmeline and Claude were becoming perfectly independent of all the world. They were indeed, at this time, all the world to each another. There was but one bitter drop in Emmeline's cup, but one cloud on the horizon of her life—the resentment of her parents, as evinced by their continued silence.

During the three weeks that had passed since her wedding, she had written twice to her Fa-

ther and twice to her Mother, but no notice whatever had been taken of her letters. This resolute and continued resistance to all her attempts at reconciliation, would have made her very anxious and very miserable, but that the passionate devotion and watchful tenderness of Claude filled every corner of her heart and every moment of her life. If he had left her alone, she would have felt that she was a Daughter ungrateful, undutiful, unforgiven. But as Claude was ever at her side or at her feet, she only felt that she was a Wife, loved, cherished, idolized.

Emmeline was an only Daughter, and her Brother had been so long absent in India with his regiment, that she had ever felt at home all the loneliness of an only child. She had never had the constant companionship of one of her own age. The few young and prematurely-wordly fashionables, at Mrs. De Vere's, were her companions for a time, but with none had she formed any great intimacy.

There was a great deal of what was great about Emmeline, and they, pretty aristocratic and refined as they seemed, were made up of littlenesses. Even in their early teens, the one object ever present to their minds was a good match.

This ambition met with no echo in the pure breast of Emmeline. She knew that a Coronet they would have considered the summit of earthly bliss was within her reach, saddled certainly with the Earl of Wrexham ; and the thought, so far from "saluting her blood one jot," as Anne Boleyn says, chilled it in her veins—while her heart beat quick at the remembered glances of Claude Lindsay, and her cheek glowed at the mention of his name.

Lizzy and Bella Lindsay, as his sisters, had a sort of interest in her eyes ; but when she left Mrs. De Vere's, although she had a lover, she had no *confidante*. She met her school-fellows at balls and *soirées*, concerts, *déjeuners*, rode with them in the Park, bowed to them from her her opera-box, and heard without emotion of the realization or disappointment of their mean ambitions, but there was not one whom she addressed as her "own Araminta," or kept up any regular correspondence with. Miriam Smyley was too entirely occupied in attendance on Lady Montresor to be much of a companion for her Cousin ; and surrounded, as Emmeline was, by all the enjoyments, luxuries, and comforts of elegant affluence, she had never fully enjoyed the pleasures of her young and fortunate exist-

ence, because she had never had a friend of her own age.

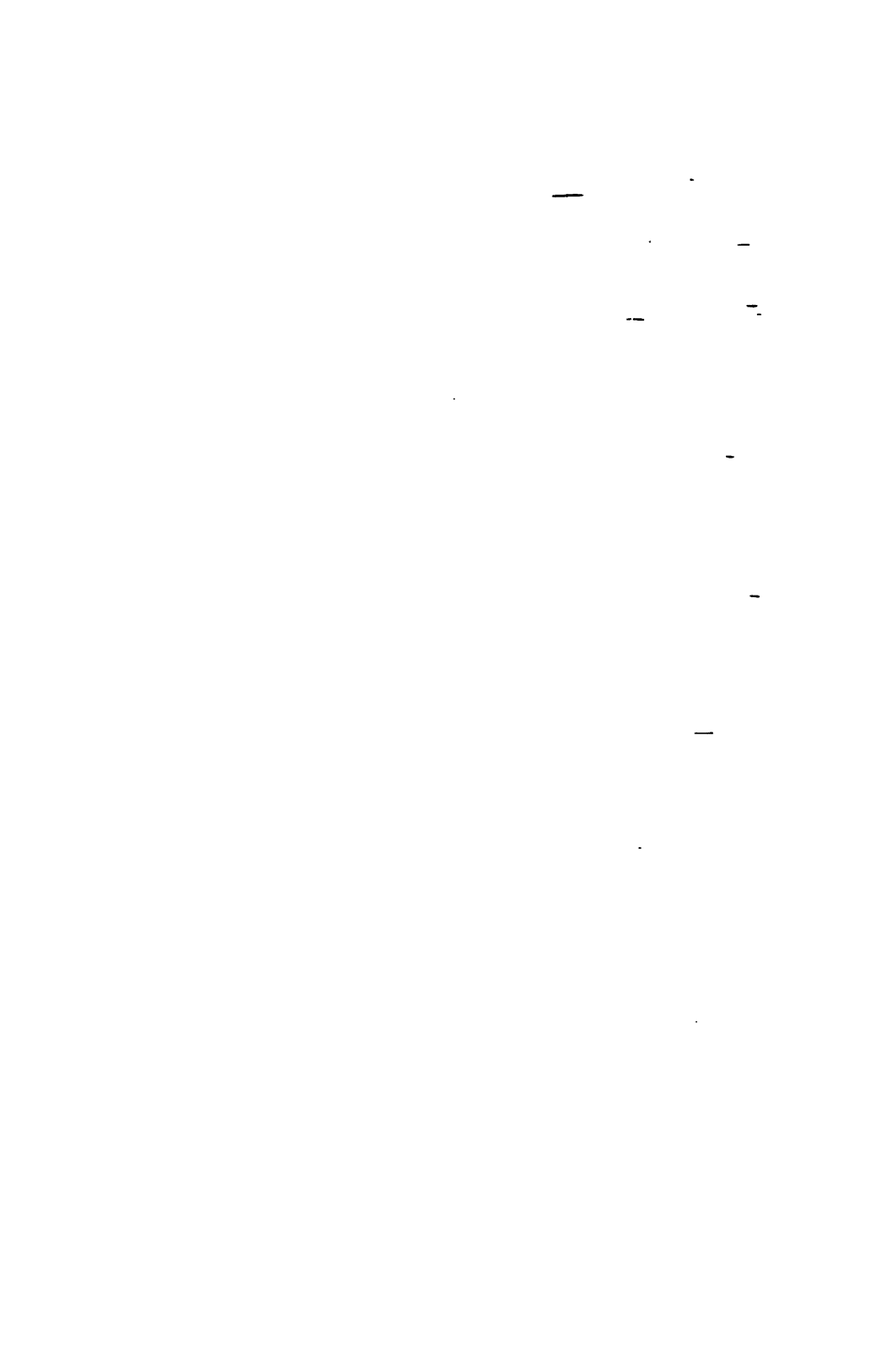
That was what Claude at this season supplied. He was at once Friend, Lover, Husband. They were both musical, and soon hired a piano and a guitar, which amply and delightfully occupied them when the weather confined them to the house. They sang together all the duets they had listened to at the Opera, when Claude from his stall used to glance at Emmeline in her Mother's box, closely watched by her *parvenue* Ladyship, who had such a dread of Emmeline's forming what she called a "*mésalliance*." It was ecstasy to them to sing these duets, so full of passionate love, together, now that nothing could part them—*nothing but themselves—they forgot that clause*—and well they might, as those beautiful airs heard in the season of estrangement and anxiety, from the lips of others, now flowed from their own. And the same sense of unutterable happiness that sent the blush to Emmeline's cheek and the tears to her eyes, made Claude grow pale, and the arm he had thrown round her waist tremble.

Then both Emmeline and her Lover-husband were fond of drawing and painting. She had a talent and taste for the art, and he had that

sort of genius which, cultivated, might have led on to fame and fortune, but which, with his idle and desultory habits, only made one regret that so much power of conception and execution should be wasted in masterly sketches swamped by his blotting-book, or thrown away on the envelopes and stray cards that littered the tables. Emmeline, on the contrary, like Tristan l'Hermite, in Louis the Eleventh, "loved to finish all that she began."

There happened to be a portrait painter in oils staying at Southend for his health. He was a man of great genius and fame. He had been much struck, when roaming ill and lonely through the Shrubbery, with the exquisite beauty of Emmeline, and the intellectual and classical charm of Claude's countenance, as they sate together on the grass, Claude reading and Emmeline listening. He had transferred them to canvass, and called the picture "Happy Love."

Some days after, Claude meeting him in the pleasant reading-room of pretty Mrs. Pilton's Cliff Library, so charmingly embosomed in trees and washed by the sea, a little interchange of politeness connected with the perusal of "The Times," led to an acquaintanceship. Mr. Lorraine Burton, the artist, invited Claude to come to his



and Emmeline set out with Claude to visit the artist.

Poor young artist ! He was in very high spirits—genius is always so hopeful ! He had been among the loiterers who had witnessed the arrival of the Bride and Bridegroom, on the evening of their wedding-day ; and though what most struck his eye, as a painter, was the singular beauty of the Bride, he could not be blind to the elegance of the equipage, the grandeur of Lankaster, and the air of style and wealth of the whole affair.

He naturally concluded, when Claude so readily agreed to call upon him, that he had found a new patron. Gifted as he was, he was poor, for he was very generous ; and he had rushed back to his lodgings to prepare for the visit of what seemed to him “ a great man.” His old landlady and the “ gal” of all-work had not had a moment’s peace. Such impromptu sweepings, dustings and scourings had been effected—curtains put up, carpets laid down, wisely kept in reserve for “ the season.”

The “ gal” had been compelled to wash her face and hands, smooth her hair, and put on her Sunday’s best ; and the old lady, to be out of the way, had retired to bed. It was a very

cold evening, although it had been a bright sunny day ; and though stands of spring flowers filled the windows, and vases of the same decked the table and mantel-piece, Lorraine Burton had wisely caused a good fire to brighten up the room and the hearth.

With the snow-white muslin curtains added to the crimson hangings, that noble fire in the grate, and a profusion of gay spring flowers both in pots and in vases, the old-fashioned, low, uneven room looked pretty and cheerful. The kettle was singing, the bright white-and-gold tea-service was set out ; Lorraine Burton scarcely dared to hope such great people would condescend to take tea with him, but in case they might be disposed to do him such an honour, he would be prepared. Did not a painter die in the arms of an Emperor ?—and had not the magnates of his art been often friends of princes and of peers ?

When all was done, the painter got his arm-chair and his book ready ; but he did not sit down nor open the volume until he heard the ring at the door, which announced his “ patrons.” Poor patrons !—Had the truth been known, Mr. Lorraine Burton was in reality better off than they were, and his prospects were brighter.

He had a great and available talent, a small competence, and habits of economy ; while they had—Claude some genius, Emmeline many accomplishments—but neither, as yet, the power of earning a penny. They had the habits, the one of ten and the other of thirty thousand pounds a year—(for years Claude's Father had not spent less)—and to meet all their real and artificial wants, they had two hundred a year (or, if Miss Meeke's allowance were not cut off), one hundred and fifty : as to economy, they did not know the meaning of the word.

Claude and Emmeline were very charming and very amiable on the evening in question—nothing makes people so charming and so amiable as that sort of happiness which springs from the affections. All other prosperity may make them proud, inaccessible, and disagreeable ; but that of the heart has a softening and humanizing influence ; on the other hand, misery makes us very morose, and disappointment very bitter. Mr. Lorraine Burton's sketches and paintings were very much admired and praised.

"And what is this ?" said Claude, touching one which, though placed on the easel, was turned with its back to them ; "may I look at it ?"

"Oh, certainly ! but it is not half finished. I

took the idea from a scene in the shrubbery—I mean to call it ‘ Happy Love ; ’ ” and he turned it towards them.

Both Claude and Emmeline uttered exclamations of pleasure and surprise. The likenesses were admirable. The sentiment perfect.

“ You must let me purchase it ! ” said Claude, as if he were still heir to a million.

“ I cannot part with it,” replied Lorraine ; “ but I will copy it for you.”

Claude remembered the state of his finances, and agreed that would be a good plan ; but he longed to possess it just as it was. He doubted whether the artist could ever again catch the exquisite and confiding tenderness of Emmeline’s face and attitude. He was pleased to see, that although he looked very much in love, it was the love of a manly and intellectual being. Emmeline and Claude were pleased with the artist, and he was enchanted with them. They gladly partook of the tea he timidly offered ; indeed, to his unutterable pride and delight, Emmeline, at Claude’s suggestion, presided at the tea-table. It was soon arranged that he should paint the portraits of Emmeline and Claude, and give them a few lessons in oil painting ; but that, he would only consent to do as a friend. He said

he never had taught painting, and he did not know that he could teach; but if they liked to let him paint in their presence, and then try what they could do under his superintendence, he should be delighted. They saw that pride was at the bottom of this arrangement; and with the princely resolution of making it up to him somehow—they agreed to his arrangement.

Claude had often wished to paint in oils, and Emmeline was delighted and amazed at his rapid progress. There is no occupation more fascinating, and our wedded lovers found it so. They were amazed at the effects they produced.

Emmeline had been taught oil-painting at Mrs. Howard De Vere's; but she had fallen into the hands of an artist, who, though an exhibitor at the Royal Academy, had no boldness or breadth. She soon got out of the niggling, finnikin style of painting taught at Mrs. De Vere's; and these trammels cast aside, she revealed great talent, and so much more patience and perseverance than Claude, that, in spite of his genius, Mr. Lorraine Burton often reminded him of the hare and the tortoise, and used to exclaim, "Slow and steady wins the race." He was become very intimate with the Lindsays, and there was seldom a day that he did not

spend two or three hours with them, in a sitting-room of the hotel, which they had very uncere- moniously converted into an atelier.

With these delightful and engrossing pursuits, painting, music, poetry, enjoyed together, Love could not fall asleep as he always does, and must do, where the mind is not called into play, to vary and enliven the monotony of existence. What society could have driven away ennui and satiety so completely as these mutual and inspir- ing occupations? The honey-moon, that seemed a long and weary year to Ruth and Lankaster, passed like a dream for Claude and Emmeline; but it did pass—they have reached its last evening.

“The month is up,” thought the landlady; “they cannot be offended at my sending in the bill.”

“The month is up,” said Lankaster to Ruth, “and to-morrow you must come to an understanding with your Missis. Another such month would make me hang myself.”

“It has been a terribly long dull month,” said Ruth.

“This is the last night of our honey-moon, dearest!” said Emmeline, as, while Claude sketched by her side, she took out her journal,

to note down the little events of the day. It was a custom she had always observed.

“Of *one* honey-moon,” said Claude—“but I hope, dearest, all our moons will be honey-moons. Tell me candidly, my darling—Do you love me more or less than the first evening we spent in this room?”

“More—a thousand times more, dearest! Every day, every hour, I grow more enamoured of your society, more dependent on your love!”

“And I can indeed say, with the poet—‘How much the Wife is dearer than the Bride!’”

“Ah, Claude, when one is very happy, one is afraid to look forward; but at the end of every month we will balance accounts—at present it is all in favour of wedded life. Look, how clear is the sky! how brilliant the moonlight—we shall have a glorious day to-morrow!”

“Every day with thee, Emmeline, is a day of delight.”

Alas! we know not what to-morrow may bring forth; and it is a merciful dispensation that we do not, else how few would be able to enjoy to-day.

CHAPTER XV.

THE REALITIES OF LIFE.

THE honey-moon set, as we have described, on a young pair, happy in their perfect love, their entire confidence in each other. As yet, there had not been a tinge of mental reservation, or what the French so expressively call *arrière pensée*, on either side. No shadow of a secret had cast its darkness over the sunshine of their love. This blissful state of things rarely outlasts the honey-moon. Friends on either side forbear, during that brief and sacred season, to intrude their advice, their affairs, to talk of the future or the past, to those who for one short month are allowed to live in the rapt and secluded enjoyment of the present—but that cannot last.

Two people—in many, in most respects

strangers, almost antagonists, form the closest of unions. They have—they wish to have—no secrets from each other; but they—though so closely bound—have ties which they cannot interweave with this indissoluble knot—ties which drag them, perhaps, by their heart-strings into interests and sympathies, the partner of their life cannot share. The woman was a Daughter and a Sister before she was a Wife; she cannot cease to be a Daughter and a Sister, even when she is a Wife. The Husband was a Son, a Brother, a Bosom Friend, before he was a Husband—he cannot forget, disown, or repudiate these ties. Both, however young they may marry, have had a past—a past of affections, interests, objects, secrets, with which the one who is now the all-in-all, has nothing to do. There are secrets in all families. The Wife must not betray them to the Husband, nor the Husband to the Wife. The Mother or Sister cannot cease to confide, but their confidence is not for a man's bosom. The Father, the Brother, will still consult the accustomed counsellor, but the Wife is to know nothing about "so delicate a matter,—quite out of a woman's way." And thus, whether they will or no, the most united couple must have secrets from each other.

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fingers, uttered a little scream. What Claude had seen with such dismay was not the total ;— the awful words, “carried forward,” met her eye : and before she reached the actual total, the full amount was more than doubled.

Emmeline’s exclamation of surprise and dismay drew Claude’s attention to his mistake. But as he heard the waiter approaching, and he had a little more experience in such matters than his Wife had, he snatched the paper from her hand, threw it down, as if it were a document of no consequence, and began a lively conversation about a picture he had commenced the day before. Emmeline saw his drift, but she could not recover herself so easily : and yet she had a very imperfect idea of the unfortunate state of affairs. The waiter pretended to come in to see if anything was wanted ; but, by his quick and watchful glances, Claude suspected that he was there in the character of a spy,— probably to ascertain what was the effect on the young couple of that important document—the bill—the first heavy bill—sent into them since their marriage ! . . .

Practised as was the waiter’s eye, he could discern nothing. Emmeline kept her gaze fixed on “Punch ;” and he could not discover that

she did not discern a word of what was before her,—yet certain was she in her heart, from the unnatural gaiety of Claude's manner, that he was very ill at ease in his mind, and that the hotel bill was the cause of his disquiet.

As soon as the waiter withdrew, Emmeline, rising, and approaching Claude, said, as she laid her white hand caressingly on his black hair,—“Is it a great deal more than you expected, dearest?” but before he replied, he stepped to the door, and opened it so suddenly, that the waiter had only time to retreat a few steps. He pretended to be knocking at the adjoining door; but Claude felt certain he had had his ear to the key-hole of their sitting-room at the moment he had disturbed him by touching the handle of the door.

“Forgive me, darling,” he said, returning to Emmeline, who looked pale and scared, though she scarcely knew why. “I felt almost certain that fellow wanted to hear our conversation; and now I am quite convinced that he did.”

“But why more this morning than on any other occasion, Claude?”

“Because his employers have just sent in a bill, which, though by no means exorbitant for all the expenses we have so thoughtlessly incurred, dearest, is a very large sum for people

of our means, and one we shall find it very difficult to pay."

"Difficult, Claude!"

"Yes, my love! it will leave us very little to go on with; and these charges, though as I said before, moderate, as hotels go, are such, that until we return to Town, we must be content to take a lodging. What money have you, my love?"

"Only about fifteen pounds; and I owe Ruth half a year's wages to-day, and have promised to pay her."

"What are her wages?"

"Two and twenty pounds a year."

"And Lankaster's? I forget what was arranged about him."

"At home he only had thirty; but there he was merely a footman. Now he is a valet; and it was understood he was to have a valet's wages—forty pounds a year."

"Emmeline, I want no valet! he is not of the slightest use to me: he is so clumsy, pompous, and unaccustomed to his duties, that I very seldom allow him to approach me at all;—he must go!"

"But if he goes, Ruth will go too," said Emmeline, in a voice of alarm and distress. "Remember, they are married!"

"Well, then, dearest, they must both go!"

"But I cannot do without Ruth! she has waited upon me ever since I was fourteen! I am so used to her; and she knows all my ways. My comfort depends entirely on poor Ruth!"

"Entirely! that is not very flattering to me! But, Emmeline, have you any idea of our actual income?"

"I know, Claude, that until my parents take me back into their favour, I have only the two hundred a year Aunt Montgomerie left me,—or, rather, a hundred and fifty; for I allow fifty pounds a year to poor Aunt Meeke."

"You will not be able to do that in future, Emmeline!" said Claude, more resolutely than she exactly liked. "At present that two hundred a year is all we have certain to live upon. Now suppose we allow your Aunt Meeke fifty pounds, and we pay Ruth twenty-two pounds, and Lankaster forty pounds per annum, how much will be left for us to live upon? Is my darling arithmetician enough to tell me?"

"Eighty-eight pounds," said Emmeline, her cheek flushing, and tears glittering in her eyes. "But, of course, I am not so silly as to suppose we can live on eighty-eight pounds, or even two hundred a year. I hope and trust Papa and

Mamma will forgive me, and make us a suitable allowance ; but if not, you have a profession, Claude.—You are a Barrister ! you must get briefs !”

Claude smiled. “ My poor Emmeline,” he said, “ few men get any briefs till they have grown grey watching for them ! There used to be more briefs than barristers ; now there are more barristers than briefs !”

“ Then you must write a book.”

“ I could not afford it, dearest !”

“ Afford it, Claude ! what can you mean ? This really is no subject for joking ! You must write a book, as other authors do, to get money by it !”

“ My dearest, most authors lose money by the books they write,—all young authors do ! No publisher will give a writer anything for a work until he has made a name. Now, the making a name is a very expensive process. If I wrote a book, I could probably only get it printed and published at my own expense. I fear, dearest, instead of its getting me into the Temple of Fame, it would lodge me in the Queen’s Bench !”

“ But Valentine Trevor ! how did he get his novel published ?”

“Why, being his fourth work, and having spent his little patrimony in publishing and puffing the other three, he got Flint and Steele to take it on half profits. Now, half profits are whole loss ! . . . No, my love ! authorship is a very expensive hobby for all but old stagers. I cannot gratify your vanity by becoming a Lion, unless the tide turns in our favour, and your Parents relent, and make us a very handsome allowance.”

“I begin to have very little hope of that now ! Oh, Claude ! what shall we do ?” And, face to face for the first time with penury, Emmeline burst into tears.

Claude rushed to her, clasped her to his bosom, folded her in his arms, led her into their *atelier*, where no one ever intruded upon them, except Lorraine Burton, on certain days and at specified hours. And there, placing her on the sofa, he knelt at her feet, and said :

“Emmeline, for heaven’s sake do not weep ! Your tears seem to burn into my heart as I see them fall ! I feel as if I had done a selfish, a base, and a cruel thing in dragging you from your happy and exalted station into scenes of privation and anxiety, which, it is evident, you can very ill endure. My passion for you has made

me very selfish ; but your sorrow is a greater punishment than I can bear. If *you* are so miserable, I shall feel that *I* am indeed most guilty !”

“ Guilty ? — No, dearest !” said Emmeline, smiling through her tears, as she saw the water sparkle in Claude’s eyes. “ Who could have imagined that Papa and Mamma would have held out so long ? If they relent, all will be well, and if they do not . . . : Why, if *you* really can do nothing, I must try what I can earn !”

“ You, Emmeline, my poor girl ! How could you earn anything ?”

“ Oh ! I am not so helpless, so ignorant, or so unenterprising as you seem to imagine, Claude. I could give lessons in music, singing, drawing ; or I could be a daily governess, or make fancy works for sale ; or, as a last resource, I could take in plain work—anything rather than see you want, Claude. Am I not your help-meet ?”

“ Emmeline, all those schemes are Utopian ; they do very well in fiction, but in fiction only. Besides, how could I bear to see you knocking, as a daily teacher, at doors you would once not have deigned to enter as an honoured guest ?

And then to think that my selfish, fatal love had brought you to such degradation? No, Emmeline; I honour you for the wish, and I know you have the fortitude to do all you have spoken of, but I should not have the fortitude to see you do it. All we can at present achieve is to live upon the small income you have been wont to spend, rather as pocket-money than anything else. To increase our means, or diminish our expenses, we have no other choice: the first, we cannot do; the latter, we must. We must look about for a cheap lodging, and some nice young girl, whom you will soon teach to supply Ruth's place, and who will serve you gladly for about eight pounds a year. 'Mr. and Mrs. Lankaster' must go. I know they meditate going, whether we wish it or no. Lankaster has been again and again on the point of throwing up his place; and Ruth has the dissatisfied, flippant manner of an Abigail 'on the go.' Until something turns up, you cannot allow Miss Meeke her wonted fifty pounds per annum; but surely, even without it, she is better off than we are. A single woman, with a hundred a year, is far richer than a married couple, brought up as we have been, with two hundred."

"It will break her heart, Claude!"

"Not so ; if she have a heart, it would rather break it to accept the money of you now."

"How can I tell her, Claude ? She must come and visit us, and then I will explain all. Let us get into a lodging at once ; and there a guest will not add much to our expenses—here it would be ruin !"

"No ; we cannot leave this place for a few days."

"Then she must come here, Claude !"

"That is impossible !"

"Why so ?"

"Well, then, if you *will* know, I, to my surprise, found a letter on the table this morning from 'Catty,' asking us to receive her here this evening——"

"And I found one on my dressing-table this morning from Aunt Meeke, and though I only as yet, have had time to glance at it, yet it strikes me that she intends being here to dinner. But why didn't you tell me of this letter of Mrs. Wheedle Browne's, Claude ?"

"And why didn't you tell me of yours, Emeline ?"

"I feared it would vex you, dearest."

"And I knew Catty's would annoy you, Love."

"Well, there's no help for it now, Claude. They are not people who would or could be put off, and we must make the best of it. What battles they will have! Aunt Meeke is such a champion of her own sex, and such an assailant of yours!—while Mrs. Wheedle Browne is always on man's side against all womankind."

"A day or two here, they must spend, my Emmeline, and we must make the best of it; but, after that time, we must tell them we are going into lodgings; then, I feel sure, my darling will give the powers of her superior mind to making our small means go a great way."

"Oh, how I long to begin!" said Emmeline, with that natural love of housekeeping inherent in woman. "What delight to make you happy and comfortable by my good management! Where is Mrs. Wheedle Browne's letter? Can I see it?"

"Why, my love, it is marked 'private and confidential,' and alludes, as she says, to some secrets of others which she has no right to betray to any one but me."

Emmeline said nothing, but a gloom overspread her face, and a pang shot through her heart, while a restraint was imparted to her manner.

"But, your letter, my Love," said Claude; "where is it? Your Aunt has no secrets, I presume?"

"Oh, yes, she has! She desires me to keep the contents of her letter strictly to myself. And, indeed, I believe that she alludes to many things, I have no wish or right to tell you. But I have not read it through yet."

It was Claude's turn to look vexed, and to feel hurt and jealous.

"Are we not one?" he said, bitterly.

"We are, or ought to be," replied Emmeline; "and I am willing to run any risk, and make any sacrifice, to preserve that unity. Show me your letter and I will show you mine. I can give you no greater proof of confidence; for Aunt Meeke often dips her pen in gall. Her letter is terribly long, and, as I said before, I have not read it."

Claude *had* read Catty's letter, and he was so afraid of the effect it might have on Emmeline's mind, and on her reception of that "Sister," that he had not courage to agree; and replied, with a forced laugh:

"No, dearest; whatever we may choose to do about our own secrets, we have no right to betray those of others. We must first give

them all fair warning, that we mean to consider letters to one, as addressed to both. And now, as the sun shines," added Claude, "get on your bonnet, dearest; it may be our last walk together for a long time. When people come unasked, they are very apt to stay unasked, too."

"Oh, what a miserable prospect!" said Emmeline; but it was of "Catty" she thought, not of Aunt Meeke.

"Yes; odious enough!" said Claude; but he was thinking of the camel-like spinster, not of the coaxing, flattering, little Catty.

As soon as Claude was alone, he began pacing up and down the room, in a state of great disquiet and extreme vexation. He felt angry with Emmeline for the first time; and yet he was aware that it was unreasonable in him to be angry with her. Not only she *had* offered to show him her letter, if he would show her his, but, of course, she was in no way responsible for the remarks and opinions of that man-hating old spinster, who had such a horror of Husbands, and of wedlock in general, and who might well dislike a marriage which, instead of bettering her position (as her Niece's making a good match would certainly have done), would pro-

bably make her little, less, by fifty pounds per annum !

Claude, like all imaginative and clever people, was an ingenious self-tormentor. He figured to himself all the (to him) mortifying and disparaging remarks Aunt Meeke had probably made about Emmeline's love-match. He dreaded the effect on her impressionable nature, of the verdict of that "SOCIETY" whose opinion she had been taught to revere. He blushed—yes, all alone as he was—he blushed to think how mean he must appear to the Aunt, when the Niece, by his desire, told her (as he knew she would, with many tears,) that the little income she (Emmeline) had allowed her as a girl, as a married woman she was compelled to withdraw.

It made this marriage seem so wretched a *mésalliance* ! Claude felt so ashamed of what must seem to Miss Meeke his inexcusable selfishness, in having entailed such poverty and suffering on one who, but for him, might have accepted and adorned the coronet of a Duchess !

Poor Claude ! For a few minutes, he contemplated telling Emmeline to inform her Aunt that the fifty pounds per annum should still be paid to her; but a little calculation convinced him this would be rash and unjustifiable. He was very

miserable. He, who had always had wealth at will, he was actually pacing the atelier, pale, bewildered, and his eyes full of tears, as he pondered on this miserable fifty pounds per annum !

Fifty pounds !—a sum he used to pay, and think nothing of it, for any trifle he fancied, any whim that came into his head ! . . .

Alas ! at that moment of bitter retrospect he could not recollect that he had ever spent that sum, on any object he could recal with satisfaction—guineas in charities ! and fifty-pound notes on vanities and idle pleasures ! . . .

Truth came to his side, hand in hand with Reflection ; and by the steady lamp of the former, Claude looked within ! . . .

A low groan escaped him. He had thrown himself on a couch, and buried his face in his hands.

Suddenly he started to his feet—a thought, a new thought, connected with that fatal letter, seemed to stab him, suddenly, and to the heart ! —Miss Meeke would probably allude to Sir Hildebrand's illness ! Claude had persuaded himself that the report was false or exaggerated. But that might not be the case. What if it were true ! What if he were seriously, dangerously ill ! . . . At the idea of Emmeline's alarm, her sorrow, her despair !—a new set of feelings

agitated him, and a universal sense of self-reproach oppressed and overwhelmed him !

Catty's letter, too ! Perhaps he should have time to reperuse it before Emmeline was ready ? Alas ! he had locked it up in his desk, and had mislaid the key ! . . .

Luckily, at this moment Lorraine Burton came in ; he brought with him a little sketch he had taken the evening before, of a curious sunset effect ; he wished Claude to try to transfer it to canvas.

Claude was glad to have his attention forced from painful contemplation and humiliating retrospects.

Lorraine Burton could not stay ; he was on his way to finish a sketch of some picturesque ruins near Southend ; but his visit had turned the current of Claude's thoughts. He had applauded his efforts, praised his talents, and prophesied that he would yet be a painter.

"I may yet atone to her," thought Claude, "for all she has sacrificed for me ! I know that competence with one she loves, and who loves her so entirely—so intensely—must be preferable, in her eyes, to wealth, title, grandeur : ay, a Dukedom, with one she did not care for ! And that competence I will strive to secure her !

I have never given my profession a fair trial ; I will do so soon ; and in the mean time, Occupation shall be my solace, and Art my best hope ! I have acted, I fear, cruelly, rashly, and selfishly, in compelling Emmeline to make me her Husband ; but if I know her heart, she will not murmur ; Love and Appreciation are the chief ingredients in a Christian woman's cup of happiness ; these Emmeline shall have !

“ As a great poet says, ‘ There is a Future left to all men who have virtue to repent and energy to atone.’

“ I have both. I will toil to secure her the comforts of life, in the hope that her noble mind can look down on its vanities ; and I will hide from her dear heart the fact that she has married a very poor man, by keeping constantly present to her mind that she has secured the best and most devoted of Husbands ! ” . . .

So thought Claude ; and he was in earnest at the time. But it was only the morn after the honey-moon ! and perhaps some refraction of that sweet moon's silver rays still purified and spiritualized his views. How will it be when the garish light of day comes in, “ making the cold reality too real ? ”

The honey-moon has passed, and Claude is

still in Love!—Love, as a passion, still fills his heart. When that fire burns itself out, as we know it must, will Love, as an affection, spring from its ashes? . . . If not, alas for Her who “Married for Love!”

END OF VOL. I.



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee.



